This study seeks to investigate the trinitarian consistency of Dumitru Staniloae's general ecclesiology, by use of a 'perichoretic model of the church', rooted in the patristic concept of trinitarian perichoresis, which describes the reciprocal interpenetration of the divine persons, based on their common divine ousia. Staniloae makes his eastern patristic understanding of the Trinity the foundation of his whole theological construction, including his ecclesiology. For him, the Church, as a theo-anthropic reality, is called to be an icon of the Trinity, a true reflection in space and time of the perichoretic relations existing eternally between the divine persons of the triune God. This calls for an ecclesiology that is rooted equally in Christology and in pneumatology, any imbalance in this dynamic leading, in Staniloae's opinion, either to excessive institutionalism and authoritarianism or to exaggerated individualism and subjectivism. The trinitarian inconsistencies revealed by the investigation model we have used arise more from the characteristic clericalist and sacramentalist tendencies inherent to Orthodoxy in general, than from the particular nature of Staniloae's theology.

Danut Manastireanu

The author holds an MA in Hermeneutics (1994) and a PhD in Orthodox theology (2005) from Brunel University, London. He works since 1999 in World Vision International, as Director for Faith & Development for the Middle East & Eastern Europe, but continues to teach theology and supervise research, having published several books and theology articles.

978-3-8465-3127-3

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Impressum/Imprint (nur für Deutschland/only for Germany)
Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek: Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über http://dnb.d-nb.de abrufbar.
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Coverbild: www.ingimage.com

Verlag: LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing GmbH & Co. KG
Heinrich-Böcking-Str. 6-8, 66121 Saarbrücken, Deutschland
Telefon +49 681 3720-310, Telefax +49 681 3720-3109
Email: info@lap-publishing.com

Approved by: London, Brunel University, PhD thesis, 2005

Herstellung in Deutschland:
Schaltungsdienst Lange o.H.G., Berlin
Books on Demand GmbH, Norderstedt
Reha GmbH, Saarbrücken
Amazon Distribution GmbH, Leipzig
ISBN: 978-3-8465-3127-3

Imprint (only for USA, GB)
Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek: The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at http://dnb.d-nb.de.
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Publisher: LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing GmbH & Co. KG
Heinrich-Böcking-Str. 6-8, 66121 Saarbrücken, Germany
Phone +49 681 3720-310, Fax +49 681 3720-3109
Email: info@lap-publishing.com

Printed in the U.S.A.
Printed in the U.K. by (see last page)
ISBN: 978-3-8465-3127-3

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A PERICHORETIC MODEL OF THE CHURCH. THE TRINITARIAN ECCLESIOLOGY OF DUMITRU STANILOAE

A thesis submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

by

Danut Manastireanu

Brunel University
Supervised at London School of Theology
An Associate Institution of Brunel University

May 2005

Acknowledgements

This study would have not been what it is without the providential opportunity to live under communism and then in the post-communist era. All through the gloomy years of communist dictatorship, my secret contacts with the *Navigators* introduced me to the concept of contextualisation, which later prompted me to engage in the unique challenge of developing an Evangelical theology within an Eastern Orthodox context. I also owe to the *Navigators* the decision to concentrate on the discipleship of a few faithful people, over radical political involvement. This made it possible for me to stay and serve in Romania rather than emigrate because of unavoidable political pressure to which I have been submitted. I consider this a great privilege, for which I gratefully thank God. During my years as a Navigator, the constant challenge of my friend, Dr. Beniamin Faragau provoked me to complement my openness to Orthodoxy with an in-depth study of it and prompted me in due time to pursue this line of research.

Throughout the communist era, a few western theologians were courageous enough to cross the Iron Curtain in order to train informally a small number of young Romanian Evangelicals. We met with them in the underground, in forests and in private homes, away from the inquisitive eyes of the secret police. It is to such people, including Wheaton College lecturers Dr. Mark Noll and Dr. Robert Yarbrough (now at Trinity International University, Deerfield, Ill.) that I owe my first introduction to theology. I am also indebted to Wheaton College for offering me, along with other Evangelical theologians from all over Eastern Europe, a scholarship for their 1996 summer school.

Dr. Iosif Ton, one of the most important Evangelical leaders in Romania, has been the initiator of many projects which have had a notable impact on the Church in Romania. One of them was a programme for training a new generation of Romanian Evangelical theologians. This was started in 1989 by London Bible College (now London School of Theology) with the generous financial support of the Romanian Missionary Society, UK, administered by Mr. Les Tidball. It was my privilege to participate in it, together with about twenty other colleagues. More than ten of these have already obtained their doctorates at various universities in the UK, with others following in their footsteps.

I owe a special word of thanks to Dr. John Stott for his encouragement and financial support through the Langham Scholarship Programme. It is a real privilege for me to be counted as a member of the Langham community of scholars. I am also thankful for the faithful financial support I received during my studies from my Scottish friends at Blythwood Foundation and from Dr. Ruth Deakin Crick at Bristol University.

My warmest and most earnest thanks for this fruitful time of theological formation go to Dr. Graham McFarlane, my academic mentor and the supervisor of both my master's dissertation (on *The Place of Scripture in the Orthodox Tradition*, 1994) and my doctoral work. We both preserve keen memories of the discussion we had in 1990, walking through the streets of Suceava, Romania, which led to the decision to pursue my passion for theology.

Dr. Douglas Farrow, then at King's College London, now Associate Professor at McGill University in Montreal, Canada played an important role in this research. Our peripatetic conversations in Oradea, Romania and our intense discussions in the warmth of his home in south London helped me formulate the central idea of my thesis, the 'perichoretic model of the Church'.

This presentation of the key influences on this research trajectory would not be complete without the expression of my deepest respect for the late Professor Colin Gunton, then at King's College London, now in the happy fellowship of the saints triumphant. He was for all of us who loved and respected him an example of a highly competent but equally humble and accessible theologian. I can never be thankful enough for the encouragement I received from him, through his allowing me to sit in on the seminars of the Institute for Theological Research at King's College and to read a paper there in 2002, and also for inviting me to write for the *International Journal of Systematic Theology*. My Romanian colleagues at London School of Theology, particularly those whose research was directly connected to the study of Orthodoxy (Dr. Paul Negrut – Emmanuel University in Oradea, where I taught for four years, and Dr. Silviu Rogobete – West University in Timisoara), and also other colleagues such as Dr. George Ille (Asbury Seminary) and Drd. Daniel Bulzan, deserve special mention. We have spent many hours together in fruitful conversations, dreaming about better days for the church in Romania and formulating concrete plans for making a contribution to the Kingdom in our particular context.

Former colleagues (such as Dr. Emil Bartos and Drd. Marius Cruceru) and former students (such as Dr. Adonis Vidu and Dr. Corneliu Simut) from Emmanuel University in Oradea have been and continue to be a constant reminder of the eternal value of making a difference in the lives of a few, in the context of theological education.

During my research years I have received much spiritual and theological benefit from my personal contact with such Orthodox theologians as Dr. Vasile Mihoc, Sibiu University, Romania; Dr. Stelian Tofana, Cluj University, Romania; Dr. Bradley Nassif, founder of the Society for the Study of Eastern Orthodoxy and Evangelicalism; and Dr. Lucian Turcescu, St. Francis Xavier University, Antigonish, Canada.

I also need to thank World Vision International, which I presently serve as Director for Christian Commitments in the Middle East and Eastern Europe, for allowing me to pursue my academic interests, while serving on their staff. This Christian relief and development organisation has offered me a context in which to develop a practical ecumenical vision for the Church of Jesus Christ and to help enrich its corporate spirituality with insights drawn from the Eastern Orthodox tradition.

I am indebted to my best friend Daniel Longyne for hosting me every time I have used the academic facilities offered by the Regenstein Library, on the campus of the University of Chicago, one of my favourite places for research during these study years. I was proud as a Romanian in that place, where the Romanians Mircea Eliade and Petru Culianu, former professors at the Divinity School, are still held in high esteem, although long gone.

This acknowledgment would not be complete without mentioning the great support I have received from Stuart and Dorothy Elford. Academic writing in English as a second language is always a great challenge. The exceptional editorial gifts of my friends have helped me produce a text that is far better that anything I could ever have produced without their help.

At the end of this tribute I would like to mention the most important people in my life. First, my model of a genuine Christian mystic the late Rev. Richard Wurmbrand, who was a living martyr of the underground church and probably the most famous (and controversial) Evangelical Christian that has ever lived in Romania. On the few occasions that I had the privilege of visiting him and his dear wife, Sabina, in their

modest home in Palos Verdes, California, I really felt as if I were walking with the saints in heaven. And, last but not least, this research would have not been possible without the loving, sacrificial and patient support of my family: my wife Mihaela, my son Daniel, and my daughter Anca-Dorotheea, together with their spouses and our five grandchildren. To them I gratefully dedicate this work.

Danut Manastireanu

May 2005

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Introduction

I never imagined in my early years that one day I would be studying theology. Living as a Christian under the communist regime, I was not allowed even to study philosophy. That is why I was forced to settle for studying economics. Yet here I am, thirty years later, at the end of a doctoral programme in theology.

1 Why Orthodox Ecclesiology?

Someone might fairly ask why did I chose to study ecclesiology, and, furthermore why Orthodox ecclesiology. The answer to the first question is quite simple. With rare exceptions, my whole Christian life, after my conversion from Marxism, has been made up of a series of traumatic ecclesial experiences. Consequently, I have chosen ecclesiology in order to make some sense of this troubling and ambiguous experience.

The answer to the second question is more complex. Although I grew up and then matured as a Christian in an Evangelical environment, I have always been fascinated with the universe of Orthodoxy.[1] The animosity of my own tradition towards the Orthodox and the reciprocal animosity of Orthodoxy towards Evangelicalism intrigued me even more. To this I have to add my inherent ecumenical bent, which complicated matters yet further. As an ecumenical Evangelical, I was always getting caught in the crossfire – from the Orthodox side, for being an Evangelical (meaning sectarian and schismatic, if not an outright heretic); from the Evangelical side, for being ecumenical (meaning confused and ready to compromise with the 'enemy'). Even so, I am convinced that, as an Evangelical living in a predominantly Orthodox environment, I have the unique opportunity of developing a contextual Evangelical theology in dialogue with this ancient Christian tradition. Furthermore, I believe that no other area in Evangelical theology is more in need of a fresh perspective than ecclesiology. I am convinced that without this, in spite of its present expansion, Evangelicalism will have no future.

[1] For a comparative view of Eastern Orthodoxy and Evangelicalism, see *Evangelicalism and the Orthodox Church* (Carlisle: Acute, 2001) and J. J. Stamoulis (ed.), *Three Views on Eastern Orthodoxy and Evangelicalism* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2004).

2 Relevance and Current State of Research in Staniloae Studies

Dumitru Staniloae (1903–1993) is undoubtedly the most important Romanian theologian of any Christian tradition. Some go so far as to call him 'the greatest Orthodox theologian' of the present time,[2] or 'the most influential and creative contemporary Orthodox theologian'.[3] Staniloae became, especially after his death, a leading member of the Romanian cultural pantheon, together with Eminescu, the poet; with Enescu, the composer; with Brancusi, the sculptor; with Ionesco, the playwright; with Cioran, the philosopher; and with Eliade, the historian of religions.[4] Thus, for anyone wanting to study Romanian Orthodox theology, Staniloae would undoubtedly be the first choice.

In spite of this privileged status, until recently[5] no comprehensive critical analysis of his theology has been produced. Moreover, with very few exceptions, most assessments of his contribution tend to fall into the genre of eulogy. One author described these exaggerated praises as the 'mummified ovations of the ecclesiastic culture'. Thus, 'his value – made into a fetish by his acolytes – has become an object of devotion, resulting in its being somewhat neutralised through the suspension of any critical thinking, while his works – more often quoted than read – have become a kind

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[2] Kallistos of Diokleia, 'Foreword', in D. Staniloae, *The Experience of God* (Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross, 1994) [henceforth *EG*], p. ix. Clément concurs with Bishop Kallistos, when he writes: 'Le Père Dumitru Staniloae est certainement aujourd'hui le plus grand théologien orthodoxe. A mesure qu'elle sera traduite dans les langues occidentales, son oeuvre s'affirmera comme une des créations majeurs de la pensée chrétienne dans la seconde moitié de notre siècle.' – O. Clément, 'Le Père Dumitru Staniloae et le génie de l'orthodoxie Roumaine', in Ioan I. Ica., ed., *Persoana si comuniune* (Sibiu: Editura Arhiepiscopiei ortodoxe, 1993) [henceforth *PC*], 82.

[3] J. Moltmann, 'Geleitwort', in D. Staniloae, *Orthodoxe Dogmatik* (Zürich: Einsiedeln and Köln: Gütersloh, 1985) 10.

[4] It is important to note that unlike Staniloae, the majority of these Romanian cultural personalities worked for most of their lives in the west.

[5] The first monograph in English on Staniloae's theology is E. Bartos, *Deification in Eastern Orthodox Theology. An Evaluation and Critique of the Theology of Dumitru Staniloae* (Carlisle: Paternoster, 1999) [henceforth *DEOT*]. The second was Charles Miller, *The Gift of the World. An Introduction to the Theology of Dumitru Staniloae* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000). Even this is not a comprehensive perspective on Staniloae's theology; or even of his *Dogmatics*. Rather, in the author's words, 'it seeks to give the reader a taste of Staniloae's deeply integrated approach to the Good News by exploring one of his most distinctive and all-embracing themes', i.e. the theme of gift – 'his view of the creation and created existence as the primordial gift of God'(3–4). See also my review of this book– D. Manastireanu, 'Review of Charles Miller, *The Gift of the World. An Introduction to the Theology of Dumitru Staniloae* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000)', *IJST*, 3, 3, Nov 2001, 333–340.

of *vulgate* of those Orthodox theologians who are marked by routine and have fallen captive to the temptation of a false dianoetic profundity'.[6]

However, not everybody is in accord with a positive evaluation of his work. Bria alludes to some of his detractors when he writes: 'The Faculty of Theology in Bucharest seems to be willing to take advantage of the fall of communism in order to minimise any reference to Fr. Staniloae's *Dogmatics*, and to denigrate the theologians in his "school"'[7]. A more nuanced critical position is that formulated by Patapievici, who tends to doubt Staniloae's originality[8]. The basis of this criticism appears to be the rejection by this Orthodox liberal thinker (in the European political sense of 'liberal') of Staniloae's staunch nationalism and traditionalism. Nevertheless, such negative reactions represent the exception rather than the norm.

Although there are already a number of doctoral theses written by Orthodox theologians on Staniloae (Giosanu, Mosoiu, Cristescu),[9] paradoxically this area of research is still dominated by the academic studies produced by Catholic (O'Brien, Roberson, Bielawski, Lupu)[10] and Protestant (Bartos, Rogobete, Henkel)[11] authors.

This being said, we may conclude that the time has come for a more in-depth critical evaluation of the contribution that Staniloae made to the theological treasury of

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[6] T. Baconsky, 'Dumitru Staniloae şi capcana clasicizarii', in T. Baconsky, *Puterea schismei. Un portret al creştinismului european* (Bucureşti: Anastasia, 2001) 240–241. I have translated into English this text and every other quotation from Romanian works present in this study.

[7] I. Bria, *Spatiul nemuririi sau eternizarea umanului in Dumnezeu* (Iasi: Trinitas, 1994), 43.

[8] 'Dumitru Staniloae was an erudite priest, able to reiterate the tradition well, but, in my opinion, a creative theologian he was not.' – H.-R. Patapievici, *Politice* (Bucuresti: Humanitas, 1997[2]), 225.

[9] The first doctoral work of an Orthodox on Staniloae's theology was written in 1994 at St. Sergius Orthodox Institute, in Paris: I. Giosanu, *La déification de l'homme d'après la pensée du Père Dumitru Staniloae* (Iasi: Trinitas, 2003). It was followed by: N. Mosoiu, *Taina prezenţei lui Dumnezeu în viaţa umană. Viziunea creatoare a Părintelui Profesor Dumitru Staniloae* (Pitesti: Paralela 45, 2002) and V. Cristescu, *Die Anthropologie und ihre Christologische Begrundung bei Wolfhart Pannenberg und Dumitru Staniloae* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Heidelberg University, 2002).

[10] E. O'Brien, *The Orthodox Pneumatic Ecclesiology of Father Dumitru Staniloae: An Ecumenical Approach* (unpublished M.Phil. dissertation, Dublin: Trinity College, 1984) was probably the first research work ever written on Staniloae. It was followed by Roberson, CROE, the first doctoral work on Staniloae; M. Bielawski, *The Philocalical Vision of the World in the Theology of Dumitru Staniloae* (Bydgoszcz: Homini, 1997); and S. Lupu, *La sinodalitàa e/o cinciliarità, espressione dell'unità e della catollicità della Chiesa in Dumitru Staniloae (1903–1993)* (Roma: Pontificiae Universitatis Gregorianae, 1999).

[11] Bartos, *Deification*; S. Rogobete, *O ontologie a iubirii. Subiect si Realitate personala suprema in gandirea parintelui Dumitru Staniloae* (Iasi: Polirom, 2001); and J. Henkel, *Eros und Ethos. Mensch, gottesdienstliche Gemeinschaft und Nation als Addressaten theologischer Ethik bei Dumitru Staniloae* (Münster: Lit verlag, 2001).

the Church during the twentieth century, for, in fact, 'we are still missing a genuine exegesis of Staniloae's work. The theological theses – few as have been written – mimic in a school-like manner just the surface themes. We still do not have a carefully worked on bibliography, a competent analysis of his intellectual filiations or a psychoanalysis of his repulsions and omissions'.[12]

Such serious exegesis would enable Staniloae's ideas to play their part in fertilising the thoughts of other people and thus stimulate the development of creative Romanian theological thinking in all Christian traditions. This was Staniloae's deepest wish, expressed in a letter addressed to one of his disciples: 'Furthering Romanian theological thought; this [desire] gives me the greatest joy. A mere string of quotations from my studies would only make things stagnate, or would even kill what is alive in them'.[13]

Our purpose in the present study of Staniloae's trinitarian ecclesiology is to make a small contribution to the effort necessary for his theological deposit to be capitalised upon. We will unavoidably be looking at it through the eyes of an Evangelical, but our approach will be neither polemical nor denominational, but hopefully simply academic.

3 Hypothesis and Presuppositions

Our first purpose in the present research is to formulate a theological model, with the help of the patristic concept of *perichoresis*. We will call this a 'perichoretic model of the Church'. We want to argue that this theoretical model is able to give us a new perspective on Staniloae's ecclesiology.

Our basic presupposition is that the perichoretic model will be a helpful tool for demonstrating the trinitarian consistency of Staniloae's ecclesiology and that the same model will also enable us to unveil potential trinitarian inconsistencies in that theology.

[12] Baconsky, *Puterea schismei*, 242.

[13] Bria, *Spatiul nemuririi*, 44.

4 Basic Structure and Content

We will begin our study with a methodological section. Its purpose is to establish the legitimacy of the use of metaphors and models in theology at the beginning of the third millennium. The next step in this section will be a thorough study of the different meanings of *perichoresis*. On the basis of the conclusions of this study we will formulate our perichoretic model.

The second section of our thesis will be dedicated to a study of Staniloae's doctrine of the Trinity, with a particular focus on his treatment of *filioque* and on the place that he gives to the concept of trinitarian *perichoresis*.

The last section of our research will concentrate on Staniloae's ecclesiology. The study of his ecclesiology proper will be preceded by an examination of the anthropological basis of this doctrine. After the analysis of Staniloae's general doctrine of the Church, we will give particular attention to his understanding of the structure and ministry of the Church. This section will be completed with a perichoretic perspective on Staniloae's ecclesiology, in which we will attempt to draw out the most important conclusions of our research.

PART I

PERICHORESIS AS A MODEL FOR ECCLESIOLOGY

Motto: [*Perichoresis*] stands as a
monument of inspired
Christian rationalism.[14]

[14] L. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* (London: SPCK, 1952), 299.

1 Modernism and Religious Symbolism

1.1 Optimism and Disillusionment

We live in a world that is expending significant energy in its attempt at understanding the nature of reality in the context of the beginning of the new millennium. Besides the *furor eschatologicus* that such moments bring with them, western society finds itself at this time struggling hard to overcome over two hundred years of what we may describe as a sort of 'Babylonian captivity' in the Land of Rationalism.

Modern thinking[15] has built on a vehement criticism of the 'dark' Middle Ages and has exalted reason as the sole foundation of the new 'enlightened' times. Thus, by the end of the nineteenth century European culture was experiencing a sort of philosophical and scientific euphoria that proclaimed its final 'coming of age'.[16]

To the symbolic and supposedly irrational presuppositions of the Middle Ages, modernity opposed what Hunter describes as 'an understanding and ordering of the world through an autonomous and human rationality'.[17] Thus, we may say that modernity[18] is characterised by 'a presumption about the universal applicability of

[15] The term 'modern' and its cognates, 'modernist', 'modernism', 'modernity', come from the Latin word *modo*, meaning 'just now', 'recent', 'present, 'contemporary'. As Patapievici suggests, 'to be modern means to be always identical with the *last* moment of time, to be the most *advanced*, the most *new*, the most *recent'* – H.-R. Patapievici, *Omul recent. O critica a modernitatii din perspectiva intrebarii 'Ce se pierde atunci cind ceva se cistiga'* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 2001). According to Hunter, the term was first used by church authorities in the fifth century in order to distinguish between 'the Christian present and a Roman pagan past'. The same author mentions an interesting observation made by Habermas. 'The term seems to appear and reappear during those periods in European history when people become aware of some new changes dawning against a vague backdrop of an ancient order receding'. It is however during the French Enlightenment that the term came to have its present meaning, of 'a distinctive and superior period in the history of humanity' – J. D. Hunter, 'What is Modernity? Historical Roots and Contemporary Features' in Philip Sampson *et al*. (eds.), *Faith and Modernity* (Oxford: Regnum and Oxford: Lynx, 1994) 13–14. See also A. Walker, *Enemy Territory* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1987), a captivating presentation of the coming into being of modernity.

[16] This euphoria also affected theology. A significant symbol of this alleged coming to maturity of Christian theology was the liberal journal *The Christian Century*, whose title suggested the desired ultimate triumph of Christianity.

[17] Hunter, 'Modernity', 17.

[18] By 'modernity', we do not just mean the type of culture and society based on the thought pattern of the Enlightenment, central as this may be. To it, we need to add at least two other important factors: the French Revolution and the Industrial Revolution, both of which decisively affected the fabric of modern European society.

reason'.[19] This reaction had its roots in earlier theoretical developments[20] and was unquestionably justified by the irrational excesses of the medieval period. The Age of Reason seemed to offer a new hope to a troubled world. However, as the process of rationalisation unfolded, the weaknesses of rationalism started to become apparent. Consequently, even such a staunch advocate of modernity as Weber was compelled to concede that in spite of its ability to make the world orderly and more reliable, rationalisation could not 'make the world meaningful'.[21]

Up to the end of the nineteenth century the outlook appeared too bright for anybody to pay attention to those prophetic voices whose disturbing messages from time to time haunted the clear conscience of the *status quo*. One possible example is that of Coleridge. He became convinced very early in the modern period that some rationalists 'in the name of reason, effectively reduced that supreme human capacity to a mere shadow of its real self'.[22] Gunton appears to confirm our previous statements when he asserts that

> …partly because other guides than Coleridge have been followed, we still live with the consequences of the virtual reduction of reason to a narrowly conceived process of reasoning. The result is that our vision is narrowed and our culture impoverished, so that if a belief or practice cannot be shown to be reasonable according to certain highly restricted canons of judgement, it will be dismissed without due consideration of its claims.[23]

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[19] Hunter, 'Modernity', 17. Berger describes in his book *Facing Up to Modernity. Excursions in Society, Politics and Religion* (New York: Basic Books, 1977) 101–112, five dilemmas of modernity: (1) *abstraction* – the 'progressive weakening, if not destruction, of the concrete and relatively cohesive communities in which human beings have found solidarity and meaning throughout most of history', which was brought about through institutionalisation; (2) *futurity* – a primary orientation towards the future as opposed to the orientation towards the past of traditionalist societies; (3) *individuation* – the progressive separation of the individual from the community; (4) *liberation* – certain areas of life previously considered to be dominated by fate became now objects of choice; (5) *secularization* – the 'weakening of the plausibility of religious perceptions of reality among large numbers of people'.

[20] Gunton rightly contends that 'the seeds of later rationalism are to be found in the medieval natural law theory that unaided reason was able to discover universal moral truth' – C. E. Gunton, *The Actuality of Atonement* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988) 4.

[21] Max Weber, as quoted in Hunter, 'Modernity', 22. The same complaint can be found in Berger, who believes that 'the critique of modernity will be one of the great intellectual tasks of the future', its purpose being to answer the question of 'how we and our children, can live in a humanly tolerable way in the world created by modernization' ('Modernity', 111–112).

[22] Gunton, *Atonement*, 1.

[23] Gunton, *Atonement*, 1.

It was only in the early twentieth century, after the shock of the First World War, that the optimism of such rationalism began to be shaken. The so-called 'civilised world' was confronted a few decades later with the horrors of the Nazi concentration camps and the communist Gulag and finally realised that the absolute reign of reason had brought it to the brink of disaster.[24]

In addition to these historical events, there has also been a series of challenges from the world of science that have called into question the scientism and positivism dominating the modernist mindset. Among them we could mention the awareness of the possible philosophical implications of entropy and the second law of thermodynamics,[25] the formulation of Heisenberg's principle of indeterminacy[26] and new approaches in the philosophy of science (Popper,[27] Kuhn[28]).[29]

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[24] The ambivalent attitude of the western world towards Nazism and communism is symptomatic of this time of transition. Firstly, Fascist ideology is rejected as the worst of all evils, while we are witnessing a resurgence of new Nazi movements in most European countries, including those in the central and eastern regions of the continent. Secondly, we have witnessed, from 1989 onwards, the fall of communism as a political system. Once the official archives were opened, confirmation of the numbers of victims of communism – amounting, shockingly, to over 100 million people – became available – see *Le livre noir du communisme: crime, terreur, répression* (Paris: Robert Laffont, 2000). In spite of all this, the left wing thinkers that dominate many European and American academic circles persist in their view that communism was fundamentally a good idea. The only problem, in their opinion, lay in the inappropriate application of these purportedly sublime ideals – see for instance Michel Dreyfus et al., *Le siècle des communismes* (Paris: De l'Atelier, 2000). Nevertheless, we find it significant that not even one of these communist experiments was successful. Thus, the task of deconstructing the so-called 'positive ideals of communism' is still to be accomplished, so that humanity is protected forever from such lethal collective horrors.

[25] For the first time science was forced to take into account the possibility of the end of the world through a thermal death of the Universe. According to this theory, formulated around 1850 by R. Clausius and W. Thomson (the future Lord Kelvin), the universe is expected eventually to reach an isothermal state with maximum entropy, so that mechanical work can no longer be possible within it. However, this presupposes that the world is a closed system, which is incompatible with the Christian worldview. See also on this, R. Swenson, *Advances in Human Ecology*, vol 6, 1997, 'Symmetry and Broken Symmetry Again: The Classical Statements of the First and Second Laws of Thermodynamics', web page accessed on Dec. 26, 2003, http://www.spontaneousorder.net/humaneco5.html.

[26] This principle, formulated in 1927 by Werner Heisenberg (1901–1976), is an essential foundation of quantum physics and states that at the subatomic level we cannot know at the same time the momentum and the position of any given particle. The principle implies that 'natural laws' are nothing more than statistical approximations, a conclusion with major philosophical implications – W. K. Heisenberg, *The Physical Principles of the Quantum Theory* (1930). See http://www.nobel-winners.com/Physics/werner_karl_heisenberg.html for a concise presentation of this 1932 Nobel Prize laureate for Physics.

[27] K. R. Popper, *The Logic of Scientific Discovery* (London: Hutchinson, 1959), first published 1934.

[28] T. Kuhn, *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (Chicago: UCP, 1970^2).

[29] Popper parted company with the method of Baconian induction, because he rejected as false the idea of a presuppositionless science. Instead, he viewed the scientist as creatively using his imagination in order to propound new scientific theories that were to be severely tested through experiments capable in

1.2 Religion and Modernity

At the beginning the 'gurus' of rationalism, such as Bacon (1561–1626)[30] and Descartes (1596–1650)[31] were, generally speaking, also religious thinkers. Patapievici suggests that in fact their method of finding truth through casting 'systematic doubt upon the whole content of the mind' is not, 'formally speaking, very different from the method of emptying the heart of all sinful passions and deceptive representations' that was characteristic of Christian mystical practice.[32] The author contends that the decision of these philosophers to use this method in a very different context indicates its enormous *prestige of effectiveness*[33] and furnishes a relevant indication of what Popper calls the 'religious character' of their epistemologies.[34]

It was only later that the war against religion in general and the church in particular,[35] perceived as the archenemy of the 'enlightened mind', became an essential preoccupation for many modernists.[36] This was waged mainly in the name of science,

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principle of falsifying them. This new approach together with Kuhn's 'paradigm change theory' has shaken the universal belief in the rationalist ideal of the 'objective scientist', who is purely interested in the progress of science. For a more extended discussion of this development, see P. Duce, *Reading the Mind of God. Interpretation in Science and Theology* (Leicester: Apollos, 1998) 10–26.

[30] See 'Famous Scientists Who Believed in God' http://www.godandscience.org/apologetics/sciencefaith.html, accessed on 13 Jan 2004.

[31] Descartes' tombstone mentions the efforts this French philosopher made during his life for the preservation of faith during a period dominated by religious scepticism – See C. Sherlock, *The Doctrine of Humanity* (Downers Grove, Il: IVP, 1996) 261, n. 33.

[32] Patapievici, *Omul recent*, 66.

[33] Patapievici, *Omul recent*, 67.

[34] K. R. Popper, *Conjectures and Refutations. The Growth of Scientific Knowledge* (London and Henley: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963) 15, quoted in Patapievici, *Omul recent*, 67.

[35] We need to avoid identifying or confusing anti-clericalism with the anti-religious spirit of modern times. Owen Chadwick, for instance, in *The Secularization of the European Mind in the 19th Century* (Cambridge: CUP, 1990) analyses the ambivalent religious attitudes of workers during that period. He concludes that the workers combined a certain 'neutrality towards religion' with general anti-clerical feelings (p. 107). Anti-clericalism, although quite old in itself, was perceived at that time as coming from the antagonism of the church to modern liberties in general and liberalism in particular (pp. 115–116). For a pertinent review of this important book, see N. Lash, 'Professor Chadwick and Secularization', *One in Christ*, 12, 2, 1976, 284–290.

[36] Hunter argues that 'the history of Christian experience and witness in the west over the past two centuries is overwhelmingly the history of the church in confrontation with modernity' ('Modernity', 12). According to Hunter, in this confrontation the churches have taken one of three basic approaches: (1) *withdrawal*, in the case of the Mennonites and the Brethren; (2) *accommodation*, in the case of liberal-modernist denominations; and (3) *resistance*, in the case of fundamentalist groups (p. 23). To these, Runia rightly adds another one (4) *dominance*, as an attempt of the larger historical churches – the Roman Catholic and the Eastern Orthodox – to dealing actively with the challenges of modernity (K. Runia, 'The Challenge of the Modern World to the Church', *EuroJTh*, 2, 2, 1993, 152). Berger, in turn, after asserting

the new 'religion' of the Enlightenment.[37] Here is a very relevant description of the general feelings on this matter at the end of the nineteenth century:

> Science is always at war with Religion. Religious men are always blind, usually stupid and often corrupt. Science has solved or is solving all the riddles of the universe; we know now and men cover their eyes if they do not see that we know. We have occupied every corner of the space and left no room for God.[38]

It is in the context of these anti-religious feelings that the Nietzschean theme of *Gott ist tot*[39] was developed. Nevertheless, as Patapievici rightly points out, 'even if dead, God remains the immovable reference of a world that once was Christian. For a world that has stopped being Christian is not simply the world before Christianity: it is *inevitably* an anti-Christian world, that is, a resentfully anti-Christian world'.[40]

However, we need to point out here a certain ambivalence in the public mentality concerning this last issue. On the one hand, society in general appeared to be favourable to religion, although vaguely defined. On the other, some leading thinkers of the time waged a merciless war against religion, perceived as a reactionary social force.[41] Duce remarks that, because of that aggression, even today, 'the "conflict"

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that in modernity there is no generally accepted 'plausibility structure', presents three possible approaches to modernity: (1) the *deductive* – the reaffirmation of a particular tradition, as in Barth; (2) the *reductive* – a radical accommodation model, like the one used by Bultmann in his demythologizing program; (3) the *inductive* – Berger's choice, a reaction that makes religious experience the basis of this relation, in the manner of Schleiermacher – from P. L. Berger, *The Heretical Imperative. Contemporary Possibilities of Religious Affirmation* (Garden City, NY: Anchor, 1979) as summarised in Lesslie Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks. The Gospel and Western Culture* (London: SPCK, 1986) 10–15.

[37] Voltaire's influence, among that of others, has been very active in propagating the false idea of the necessary enmity between religion and science.

[38] Chadwick, *Secularization*, 177–178.

[39] F. Nietzsche, *Also Sprach Zarathustra*, part IV, 1885.

[40] Patapievici, *Omul recent*, 87.

[41] Chadwick (*Secularization*, ch. 7) mentions a number of true symbols in this so-called 'war of Science against Religion'. Among the most important ones we could enumerate, alongside Charles Darwin, authors such as J. Draper, who produced a veritable manifesto of this conflict (*History of the Conflict between Religion and Science*, 1874), K. Vogt (*Lectures on Man: His place in Creation and the History of the Earth*, 1863) – a true scientist and an explosive personality, J. Moleschott, who coined the phrase 'no thought without phosphorous', reinterpreted by Feuerbach as 'Man is what he eats', Ludwig Büchner (*Force and Matter*, 1855) and E. Haeckel (1834–1919) – possibly one of the most vehement proponents of materialistic monism, as well as T. Huxley (*Essays*, 1892) – the 'exceptionally able publicist' who argued for the reception of Darwin's ideas in the British Isles.

metaphor is still prevalent in popular culture, despite its mythical character and inadequacy as a fully satisfactory historical model'.[42]

The process began with the affirmation of the so-called 'objective character of science' together with the relegation of theology to the subjective realm of values. Sampson summarises this development well when he writes that 'modernity has been associated with the displacement of superstition, religion and tradition by scientific knowledge and technology, leading to industrialisation and social progress'.[43] The success of this operation was nevertheless ensured by the pietistic withdrawal of theology from the public sphere.[44] In turn, this 'privatisation' of religion has led, possibly not just in Evangelicalism, to what Wells described as the 'disappearance of theology from the life of the Church',[45] and, as a result, to the inability of the Church to respond adequately to the challenges of modernity.

Thus, it appears that in spite of its undeniable positive contribution rationalism did not really deliver what it promised. Ome could say that the western world has been left in more trouble than before because of this development. The tragic events of September 11th 2001 and those that followed, prove that our ignorance of the role, both positive and negative, that religion can play in the twenty first century is extremely dangerous and may bring about startling consequences.

Having thus taken account of the cultural and philosophical background described above, we are now prepared to make a further step in our discussion, by considering the place of the symbolic in modern western secular society.

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[42] Duce, *Mind of God*, 3–4.

[43] P. Sampson, 'The Rise of Postmodernity' in Philip Sampson *et al*. (eds.), *Faith and Modernity* (Oxford: Regnum and Oxford: Lynx, 1994) 31.

[44] This is what R. Macauley calls the tendency to 'isolationism' in 17th and 18th century pietism – 'The Pietist Roots of Evangelicalism Today', *L'Abri Lectures*, 1 (1991). Chadwick may be right when he declares that the truth of the statement that pietism was isolationistic is difficult to establish historically (*Secularization*, 139). Nevertheless, we can observe a near consensus among modern authors that this is in fact an undeniable reality.

[45] D. F. Wells, *No Place for Truth or Whatever Happened to Evangelical Theology?* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans and Leicester: IVP, 1993) 95–136. The author sees this 'disappearance' as happening at the level of (1) *confession* – through the inability to preserve the doctrinal identity of the church (2) *reflection* – through the incapacity to think Christianly about the world and (3) *virtue* – through abandonment from a Christian lifestyle, under the relativising pressures of modernity.

1.3 The Crisis of Religious Symbolism

There is little doubt that we live in a desacralized world. Ricoeur asserts that in fact, 'our modernity is constituted as modern precisely by having moved beyond the sacred cosmos'.[46] This is our starting premise in the present section. Our basic argument here is that the confrontational nature of the relationship between Christianity and modernity is intrinsically related to the validity crisis of the symbolic universe that dominated and gave coherence to the noetic framework of humanity before the Age of Reason.[47] This correlation of the religious and the symbolic is of utmost importance for the subject under scrutiny in our present research.

The Greek word *symbolon* suggested originally the idea of a part of something (a contract, for instance) that guaranteed the presence of the whole. Until about two centuries ago symbols, whether religious or not, played an essential role in giving cohesion and meaning to society.[48] Their general role was to represent, reveal and mediate access to a certain transcendental reality that was not accessible directly.[49] Consequently, the role of religious symbols was to bridge the ontological gulf that exists between the believer and their 'religious Focus', as Smart calls it.[50]

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[46] P. Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred. Religion, Narrative and Imagination* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1995) 61.

[47] Runia presupposes this to be true and mentions that according to Berger, American society may become less secular when 'the symbolic centre of the society would move to the right religiosity' ('Challenge', 154).

[48] The issue of the mechanism that brought to an end this domination of the symbolic is still under debate. In a short essay on this theme Patapievici discusses a very interesting suggestion made by I. P. Culianu (who took over from Eliade the chair of comparative religions at Chicago University) in his book *Eros si magie in Renastere: 1484* (Bucharest: Nemira, 1994) 265–284. Culianu propounds the thesis that Puritanism (through the 'twin instruments' of Reformation and Counter Reformation) is responsible for precipitating the elimination of the 'symbolic man of the Renaissance' and his replacement with the 'secular rational man of modernity'. According to Patapievici, this 'castration of the imagination' made man a very abstract being and brought about an inner aridity and a disconnection from the divine that were compensated for only though the birth of modern science and technology – Patapievici, *Cerul*, 356–362.

[49] Tillich believes that the most important function of the symbol is the 'opening up of levels of reality which otherwise are hidden and cannot be grasped in any other way' – P. Tillich, *Theology of Culture* (Oxford: OUP, 1959) 56. According to Eliade, the true function of symbol is 'to transform a thing or an action into something other than that thing or action appears to be in the eyes of profane experience' – M. Eliade, *Patterns in Comparative Religion* (London: Sheed and Ward, 1979) 445. For a detailed introduction to religious symbolism, see K. Goldammer, 'Religious Symbolism and Iconography' in *The New Encyclopaedia Britannica*, vol. 17 (London: Encyclopaedia Britannica Inc., 1978) 900–909.

[50] N. Smart, *The Phenomenon of Religion* (London: Macmillan, 1973) 5, as quoted in David Bastow, 'The Possibility of Religious Symbolism', *RS*, 20, 1984, 563.

According to Dillistone, the concept of the symbol was central in the thinking of philosophers such as Cassirer, Jaspers and Ricoeur, of theologians such as Rahner, Lonergan and Farrer, of historians of religion as Eliade and of art historians as Gombrich. [51] It was defined in various manners: (1) as 'a sign which is semantically non-arbitrary';[52] (2) 'the self-realisation of a being in the other, which is constitutive of its essence';[53] (3) 'an object or pattern which, whatever the reason may be, operates upon men and causes effects on them, beyond mere recognition of what is literally present in the given form';[54] (4) 'any structure of significance in which a direct, primary, literal meaning designates, in addition, another meaning which is indirect, secondary and figurative and which can be apprehended only through the first'.[55] As we can observe, these authors emphasise different aspects and roles of the symbol. To add just a few more from Dillistone, 'for Whitehead the symbol refers to meaning; for Goethe it represent the universal; for Coleridge it participates in reality; for Toynbee it illuminates reality; for Goodenough it effects a transformation of the literal and commonplace; for Brown it veils the Godhead'.[56] Nevertheless, whatever the differences between these definitions, they all suggest that what the religious symbol essentially does is to connect, to bridge the gap between our world and the transcendent reality that the symbol represents.

Some authors[57] have observed the influence of two fundamental traditions in the interpretation of symbols. One is rooted in Aristotelian logic and concentrates on language. Applying this approach to the interpretation of sacred images in Roman Catholicism, Rahner understands them 'as an outward sign of a reality distinct from the image'. Thus the image becomes 'a merely pedagogical indication provided for man as

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[51] See F. W. Dillistone, *The Power of Symbols* (London: SCM, 1986) 117–151.

[52] Bastow, 'Religious Symbolism', 559.

[53] K. Rahner, *Theological Investigations*, vol. 4 (London: DLT and New York: Seabury, 1974) 234.

[54] E. Goodenough, *Jewish Symbols in the Graeco-Roman Period*, vol. 4 (New York: Pantheon, 1953) 28f., as quoted in Dillistone, *Symbols*, 12.

[55] P. Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 1974) 12.

[56] Dillistone, *Symbols*, 13.

[57] We could mention among them Rahner, who discusses the issue in the context of the theology of sacred images, Gombrich and Bridge, who trace the two traditions in the history of art and Dillistone, who discusses the issue in general terms.

a being who knows through the senses'.[58] According to Dillistone, in spite of its 'spectacular results',[59] this rational and logical perspective tends to underestimate the power of intuition and imagination and is permanently in danger of reducing symbols to strictly defined signs.

The other type of interpretation is grounded in the Neo-Platonic worldview. It is visual in its inclination and 'ever open towards transcendent realities'. When applied to sacred images, like icons in Eastern Orthodoxy, this approach regards them as participating in bringing about the reality that they represent. The constant danger of this more imaginative approach is evaporation into mystical unreality.

What we have before our eyes is, according to Dillistone, 'an age-long polarity which will continue to influence the interpretation of symbolic images'.[60] We would like to suggest that a coherent understanding of the issue has to keep in creative tension both the denotative and the connotative dimensions of religious symbols.

One other very important aspect for our discussion here is that of the life, death and rebirth of symbols. Tillich is right when he argues that because of their ambiguity, symbols 'have the tendency (in the human mind, of course) to replace that to which they are supposed to point, and to become ultimate in themselves'.[61] When this happens, they become idols. The same author then contends that a symbol cannot be killed by empirical criticism, using arguments from natural sciences or history, nor can it be replaced when it is used in its special function. However, it will die if it becomes inadequate to the situation in which it is used, that is, if it ceases to 'open up' the reality that would be hidden to us without it.[62]

Bridge argues along the same lines, commenting on the issue from the standpoint of art history. He adds that once a symbol ceases to point to a reality beyond itself, once it is 'used for its own sake and is treated like a fact – that is to say, as a self-

[58] Rahner, 243. It is surprising that Rahner does not observe, or at least he fails to take into consideration the implication of these comments for the theology of the sacraments.

[59] We suggest that Dillistone here alludes to the systematising accomplishments of Scholasticism.

[60] Dillistone, *Symbols*, 151.

[61] Tillich, 58–60.

[62] Tillich, 65–67.

sufficient reality – it dies'.[63] This is exactly what happened in both liberal humanism, through a denial of the transcendental reality to which symbols point, and in fundamentalism, where symbol was equated with the reality it represents.[64] Dillistone adds finally that another reason for the death of a symbol is 'the attempt to impose upon it a completely fixed, restricted, confined *interpretation*'. Thus, literalism is perceived as another arch-enemy of symbolism.[65]

If symbols do indeed die, in spite of the fact that they are essential in bringing meaning to human existence, what can we then do about it? Two generic solutions have been suggested. The first is that of replacing the dead symbols with new ones that are adequate to the new context. Bridge calls this 'remythologisation'.[66] Although plausible, this has proved to be a very slow and difficult process, mainly because people find it difficult to understand and accept new symbols.[67] The second possible strategy, which we are endorsing in the present study, is that of reinterpreting the old symbols in the light of present conditions and of re-educating people to understand the old symbols. Although there is no guarantee, this second approach has a much better chance of success than the first.

Modernist rationalism and the impersonal technical culture it produced were not only very suspicious of but also antagonistic to symbolism, because of its alleged irrationality. Here is how Dillistone explains this sort of 'nothing-more'-ism, as he calls it:

> If the whole universe is simply a set of techniques and nothing more; if the history of mankind is the record of increasingly efficient social organisation and nothing more; then symbolism is now a relic of the past, a means perhaps of arousing mass-

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[63] A. Bridge, "The Life and Death of Symbols', *Th*, 61, 451, 1958, 10. The author tends to agree with Bultmann's demythologising presuppositions, in the sense that he argues for a sharp dichotomy between myth and symbol on one side and history on the other. At the same time, he tends to reinterpret demythologisation loosely for his own purposes, defining it as 'a process of clearly distinguishing between symbols… and the truth symbolised'. Failure to make this distinction, by trying to '"play safe" and preach myth as history and symbol as reality… will lead to a dead and self-stultifying academism' and would mean simply 'to commit suicide', both in theology and in the arts (p. 14).

[64] Bridge writes about a humanistic 'conditioning process' which has led to this situation and will need to be counteracted before any renewal of the symbolic becomes possible (p. 13).

[65] Dillistone, 219.

[66] Bridge, 12.

[67] Both Bridge (p. 12) and Dillistone (p. 217–219) agree with this, advancing arguments from the art history and theology, respectively.

> emotion or revolutionary fervour but of no significance in the interpretation of ultimate reality. Logical positivism and dialectical materialism, biological determinism and scientific psychoanalysis have no place for *symbolic forms*. All seek to reduce the universe and humanity to some single operative principle and to exclude the continuing effects of personal relationships either between humans and their world or between humans and their neighbours. The eclipse of the personal involves the eclipse of the symbol.[68]

It was only after the age of Romanticism, and particularly during the first half of the twentieth century, that symbolism started to regain its due role in literature, philosophy and theology.

The French author Jean Borella[69] believes that the violent reaction of rationalism and naturalism against religious symbolism is determined by the fact that it presupposes a transcendental referent, without which no genuine symbolism or religion could ever exist. By contrast, the naturalist worldview does not leave any place for religious metaphysics, hence its anti-religious stance.

Borella[70] identifies three successive stages in the crisis of religious symbolism.

(1) He calls the first step of this process the '*negation of the referent or destruction of the mytho-cosmos*'.[71] This happens, the author believes, because of the cosmological revolution initiated by Galileo, which 'destroys any possibility of a natural theophany'.[72] The immediate result is that sacred symbols lose their transcendental

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[68] Dillistone, 229.

[69] J. Borella, *Criza simbolismului religios* (Iasi: Institutul European, 1995). The author, formed in the esoteric tradition of R. Guénon and F. Schuon, takes a semiotic approach in analysing the crisis of religious symbolism in western society.

[70] Borella, 9–11. It is interesting to observe the striking similarity between Borella and the Dutch theologian G. Heitink, in his analysis of secularization (quoted in Runia, 'Challenge', 149).

[71] Borella, 9. Heitink describes it as '*loss of a religious frame of reference*'.

[72] S. Avadanei describes in his book *La inceput a fost metafora* (Iasi: Virginia, 1994) the modern clash between religion and science. He calls this the 'purgatory of religion', adopting a phrase coined by W. R. Inge. He contends that the process develops in two steps. The first took place in the seventeenth century, when 'astronomy separated mythological space from scientific space'. The second happened in the nineteenth century, when 'geology and biology [did] the same thing for time', leading to the Nietzschean cry: 'God is dead!' Paradoxically, the author believes that, at the same time, science also contributed, through a counter-action move, to the consolidation of religious thinking, Protestantism making a particular contribution in this context, through the 'undermining of the medieval concept of hierarchy' (pp. 198–199).

referent and become mere signs, pointing towards a 'non-real entity'.[73] Consequently, the metaphysical dimension of the symbol is lost forever, the arch-enemy of reason being finally tamed and reduced to mere immanence.

(2) The other most important moment within the crisis of religious symbolism consists in the '*subversion of meaning or neutralising of religious consciousness*'.[74] Borella describes it as the application of a 'demystifying hermeneutic of the religious consciousness'. The consequence of this operation, directed towards what is perceived by the modern to be the 'subjectivity of an alienated consciousness', is that 'the meaning of symbols cannot be what we supposed it to be, given that religious consciousness does not know what it is talking about'.[75] This is understood in the sense that, as we explained before, the symbol points now towards a supposedly illusory, non-existent reality. At the end of this stage, we are left without a metaphysical referent and, as a result, with a sign devoid of transcendental meaning.

(3) The final stage in the crisis of religious symbolism is called by Borella the '*empire of the signifier or occultation of the symbol*'.[76] At this point in the process, particularly in structuralism and deconstruction, the 'signifier' is placed at the centre of the critical effort, as the structural principle of reason and consciousness.

If this analysis is correct and religious symbolism has indeed died, we have to ask what the consequences of that death have been. We suggest that the rationalist opposition to symbolism has led philosophical criticism to a rejection of pure reason itself, or as Borella puts it, to a 'speculative suicide'. Thus, 'dying, the religious soul drew with it [into death] the rational soul'.[77] Newbigin also believes that 'the history of western man in the past two hundred years has been shaped by an illusion. And it might

[73] A very interesting historical fact related to this development is that in July 1682 the French legal system decided to stop treating witchcraft as a crime, which may be seen as an ironic consequence of this 'death of transcendence' (Patapievici, *Cerul*, 361–362).

[74] Borella, 10. Heitink talks about a '*loss of relevance*', expressed through doubt in the intrinsic value of belief.

[75] Borella, 10.

[76] Borella, 10. Heitink describes it as a '*loss of transcendence*', understood as a restriction of all reality to the apparent dimension of the universe.

[77] Borella, 5.

be that the signs, manifest all around us, of the disintegration of this culture of ours are ultimately attributable to that illusion'.[78]

Nevertheless, contends Patapievici, 'it is not modernity that is bad, but the fact that it has been transformed into a horizon with no alternative for our life. Today, neither Tradition, nor the Middle Ages, or the *ancien régime* – nor, certainly, who knows what kind of New Age can be an alternative to modernity. Once we have become modern people, the alternative to the idiocy of modernity [*sic*!] cannot be anything else than the goodness of modernity'.[79] By this, he means that the instruments that modernity gave us have to be tempered with purposes and ideals that are rooted in the most fundamental Christian values. Thus, concludes Patapievici convincingly, 'today, nobody can renounce modernity without producing a catastrophe of civilization. At the same time, nobody can live with it alone anymore, without being reduced in the end to a type of existence that deserves our contempt'.[80]

Before going any further, we need to ask ourselves if Borella's thesis on the success of such a radical effort in suppressing religious symbolism is indeed warranted or whether the whole story is a purely theoretical construct. We believe we have serious reasons to doubt that the demise of religious symbolism, obvious as it appears to be, was in fact as extensive as Borella would have us believe. Eliade argues that in fact 'the symbol, the myth and the image are of the very substance of the spiritual life; …they may become disguised, mutilated or degraded, but are never extirpated'.[81] The crypto-religious character of rationalism[82], with its cortège of fake symbols, appears to justify

[78] Newbigin, *Foolishness*, 41. Wells quotes a whole series of contemporary authors who agree with the above conclusion. Thus, Solzhenitsyn describes our time as 'a world split apart'. Ellul, in his turn, talks about 'the "betrayal" of the west by corrupted intelligentsia'. Carl Henry talks about the 'end of the west'. Graham Greene has spoken about 'the disintegration of spiritual values in the "sinless, graceless, Chromium world" of modernity. In addition, Pope John Paul II has spoken about the 'anticivilization' and 'anticulture' nurtured by modernity (*Truth*, 56–57).

[79] Patapievici, *Omul recent*, 13.

[80] Patapievici, *Omul recent*, 14. A similar conclusion is formulated by T. C. Oden in his book *After Modernity… What? Agenda for Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1990). The author suggests that we cannot return to pre-modernity, but we need to search for a 'conciliar' type of theology as a cure for the problems created by modernist theology.

[81] M. Eliade, *Images and Symbols. Studies in Religious Symbolism* (New York: Sheed and Ward, 1969) 11. Later in the same book, the author exemplifies this by stating that, in fact 'the most abject "nostalgia" discloses the "nostalgia for Paradise"' (p. 16). Chadwick describes the same process in the following words: 'We got rid of imps and demons but we pushed them into the subconscious and called them by different names. We got rid of witches by learning to take no notice of their spells' (*Secularization*, 258).

[82] Eliade, *Images*, 10.

Eliade's opinion. Science also, as we have already stated has received in recent centuries a quasi-religious veneration and its statements, even in areas beyond its authority, have come to be viewed as infallible, any dissent being treated as obscurantism or even 'heresy'.

To give just one other example, let us think for a moment about communist ideology. Marxism, which according to Chadwick[83] played a major role in secularizing modern society, manifests an obvious enmity towards religion, which Marx called 'the opiate of the people'.[84] In spite of this, Marxist ideology has a fundamentally soteriological character, being rooted in the conscience of the masses through a whole paraphernalia of symbols, initiation rites and the like, which indicates its quasi-religious character. Eliade, in this context, makes the interesting observation that 'of all our modern European spirituality, two things alone *really* interest the non-European worlds: Christianity and Communism. Both of these, in different ways and upon clearly opposed grounds, are soteriologies – doctrines of salvation – and therefore deal in "symbols" and "myths" upon a scale without parallel except among non-European humanity'.[85]

At the same time, as Borella himself admits, we perceive in western society today a tendency towards a 'conversion' of intelligence to symbol, or 'the return of *logos* towards *mythos*'.[86] Dillistone quotes a significant passage from an article where the author (not mentioned) argues, as we have done, that: 'this century has seen a retreat from religious symbolism'. Then he goes on to assert that 'we exist within the confines of an urban, secular world: mechanistic, technological and rationalistic. Consequent spiritual disintegration has all but destroyed our ability to respond to ancient symbols. But they will not go away. We are witnessing a resurgence [of them]…'[87] It is this

[83] Chadwick, *Secularization*, ch. 3.

[84] K. Marx, *A Contribution to the Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Law*, 1844: 'Religion is the sigh of the oppressed creature, the heart of a heartless world, just as it is the spirit of a spiritless situation. It is the opium of the people. The abolition of religion as the illusory happiness of the people is required for their real happiness. The demand to give up the illusion about its condition is the demand to give up a condition which needs illusions'.

[85] Eliade, *Images*, 10.

[86] Borella, 5.

[87] 'Symbols of life', *The Listener*, 4 April 1985, quoted in Dillistone, *Symbols*, 12.

resurgence of the symbolic and its relevance for our theological task that we shall seek to explore in the following section.

1.4 The Return of the Symbol

While there is no fully established consensus, it is widely agreed that, in spite of its anti-religious bent, Freudianism lies at the origin of the present renewal of interest in symbols, whether religious or not.[88] To this we might add the massive accumulation of ethnographic material that has proved beyond any doubt the overwhelming importance of sacred symbolism in practically every known human culture, as well as the 'return to symbolic means of communication' in the modern arts.[89]

Eliade, animated by his syncretistic disposition, is ready to welcome this sort of rebirth of symbolism as a major event in western culture. He believes that it may herald the birth of a new type of religiosity, at the 'providential' intersection of psychoanalysis and the new discoveries of the science of religions. The basis of this reaction is Eliade's firm conviction concerning the persistence of symbol in the human spirit. He argues that, in spite of the stern efforts of the rationalists, 'the life of modern man is swarming with half-forgotten myths, decaying hierophanies and secularized symbols', waiting to be resurrected by the postmodern man, when he is finally able to free himself from the 'Procrustean bed' of naturalism.[90] Because of his innate optimism, Eliade believes that the fundamental symbolic structure of human spirituality will ensure in time the total recovery of sacred symbolism.

However, not everybody believes this to be true. While Ricoeur agrees with Eliade that we can find 'vestiges of the sacred in our culture',[91] yet he is not so ready to welcome this as a necessarily positive phenomenon. He describes these vestiges as a

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[88] Eliade, *Images*, 12–16. G. Durand – *Structurile antropologice ale imaginarului* (Bucharest: Univers enciclopedic, 1998) 8 – appears to agree with Eliade, adding to Freudianism the impact of surrealism, of the 'New Scientific Spirit' and of the systematising efforts of Lévi-Strauss, Ricoeur, Bachelard, Corbin and Eliade.

[89] Bridge, 13.

[90] Eliade, *Images*, 18.

[91] Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*, 62.

'residue, or worse, a substitute sacred that does not merit survival'.[92] Then he goes on to explain that:

> One cannot draw an argument, much less an apologetic, from the fact that the sacred is folded up in camouflaged myths or degenerate rituals, be it a question of our holidays, marriage ceremonies or funerals, the current interest in the occult, or attempts to transfer the sacred into the political sphere. Nor may one rejoice to see here or there theories of psychoanalysis invited to reap the heritage of the sacred, to mythologize the unconscious, or to develop the analytic experience into a form of initiation. The retreat of the sacred into the unconscious is no less a part of its being forgotten than is the elevation of science and technology to the rank of our dominant value. Indeed, this retreat is just the dark side of the same phenomenon, the counterpart of the Enlightenment. If only the person who dreams bears the sacred, this fate attests to the impotence of the sacred to furnish models of behaviour for waking life or to transform reality in accordance with the paradigms that still haunt our sleep.[93]

Borella appears then to be justified when he doubts that the search for primordial archetypes in the depth of the human psyche is going to lead unfailingly to a genuine recovery of symbolism. He goes so far as to proclaim solemnly that this so-called 'return of the symbolic'

> …is possible only because of the radical and complete undermining of its meaning. Far from having recovered the true sense of symbol, modern culture is removed from it to such an extent that it can invoke it and reach it in full serenity. Symbolism has become harmless: it could not *byte* reality [*sic*!] anymore. The culturological reduction has tamed it; the Freudian hermeneutic has distorted it. We are no longer taking any risks when we abandon ourselves deliberately to the imaginary; this being so, the western soul is even able to quieten his remorse for having killed God and for having negated the sacred.[94]

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[92] Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*, 62. Although he believes that 'humanity is simply not possible without the sacred', Ricoeur argues that both the degenerate traces of the sacred, and the scientific-technological ideology are 'constitutive of the cultural configuration of nihilism' and they deserve to die if life is to keep any significance (p. 64).

[93] Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*, 62.

[94] Borella, 189.

For a number of reasons, this superficial recovery of symbolism is not an option for the Christian. Firstly, the sacred cannot be real until the transcendental referent of the symbol is re-established. However, the transcendental referent of the sacred has not been restored at least as far as Freudian psychoanalysis is concerned. The reverse is true; Freudianism is avowedly this-worldly. Secondly, if the Christian intends to remain genuinely a Christian and, at the same time, be attuned to modernity, he appears to find himself in a real deadlock.[95] In the end, it appears that he will have to sacrifice either the basic symbolism of the Christian dogma, or the intellectual exactingness of modernity. To this dilemma Borella proposes a fundamentally neo-Gnostic and esoteric solution, rooted in the tradition of Platonism.[96]

Borella's proposal is not a valid Christian alternative, at least according to Christian tradition, which has always (when true to itself) been antagonistic to the endemic Gnostic tendencies present in the Greco-Roman world. The problem described above remains, nevertheless, a real challenge for us. The solution, however, cannot be found in a choice between symbolism and the sacred on the one hand and rationality on the other, conceived as antagonistic polar realities, but in a paradigm shift that will restore the place of the symbolic, while incorporating the positive gains of modernity. As we have already suggested, this is in fact the solution that Patapievici put forward in his work on the 'recent man',[97] and it is also what Ricoeur proposes, in a different manner, when he calls for a symbiosis of 'manifestation' and 'proclamation', of the sacred and the kerygmatic, of sacrament and preaching.

> There would be no hermeneutic if there were no proclamation. But there would be no proclamation if the word, too, were not powerful; that is, if it did not have the power to set forth the new being it proclaims. A word that is addressed to us, rather than our speaking it, a word that constitutes us, rather than our articulating it – a

[95] This is proven, believes Borella (p. 189), by what he calls the 'extreme gravity of the Bultmannian [demythologising] approach'. Ricoeur is himself not satisfied with demythologisation, although he believes that such a program is in fact 'an attempt to radicalise a tendency already at work in primitive Christianity'. By this, he means the tendency to build a 'kerygmatic religion [that] is virtually antisacral'. He seeks instead for 'some mediation between the sacred and the kerygma' – *Figuring the Sacred*, 62–3.

[96] Borella, 10–11.

[97] Patapievici, *Omul recent*.

> word that speaks – does not such a word reaffirm the sacred just as much as abolish it?[98]

In stating this, Ricoeur affirms the necessarily dialectic relationship of the sacred and the rational dimensions of the Christian religion.

Furthermore, according to Newbigin, we are now in a similar situation to that of Augustine, in which the older paradigm had 'lost the power to renew itself' and needed to be radically replaced with a new one. If this is true, then we should

> …follow the example of Augustine in being ready, boldly and without embarrassment, to offer to our dying culture the framework of understanding that has its base in the work of Jesus and to invite our contemporaries to join with us in a vigorous attempt to understand and deal with our experience in the light and in the power of that name.[99]

Among other things, the renewal of interest in the use of symbols, metaphors and models in Christian theology that we have discussed above may prove to be a fruitful path in finding a way out of the dead-end into which Western culture has been led by giving in, in one way or another, to the compelling calls of modernity.

1.5 Conclusions

Modernity exalted reason as the supreme instrument in making the world more meaningful. Rationality came to be perceived as being in opposition to religion, particularly in its institutional forms. Religious beliefs and values were relegated to the private sphere, while the public scene was dominated by science, the new 'religion' of modernity.

Converting to secularism, the modern person attempted to make sense of reality without any reference to transcendental realities. Secular modernity has been shown to be uneasy about the idea of religious symbolism. However, we have witnessed in the last few decades a certain resurgence of symbolism, a trend which if continued could eventually lead to its full recovery. The main points of this contention can be summarised as follows:

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[98] Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*, 65.

[99] L. Newbigin, *The Other Side of 1984. Questions for the Churches* (Geneva: WCC, 1983) 63.

Modernism rejects on rationalistic grounds the transcendental referent that characterises any religious symbolism. This explains its hostility towards religious symbolism and its overall anti-religious character.

Although regarding religion with suspicion, modernity does not necessarily rule out the possibility of it, but relegates it to the secondary sphere of private life.

Because of secularization, among other factors, religious symbols were seriously questioned by rationalism and went through a process of degradation, becoming finally mere 'signs', relegated to the realm of immanence.

The absolute reign of reason led in the final analysis to the undermining of reason itself. The various crises of the twentieth century and other recent developments have given rise to serious doubts about reason's ability to help humanity 'come of age'.

In fact, it appears that because of the fundamentally religious nature of humanity, symbolism can never be completely eradicated. Indeed, following the relatively recent developments in ethnology and psychoanalysis, we witnessed in the second half of the twentieth century a sort of resurrection of the symbol, including its religious aspects.

Although one may welcome such a renewal of interest in symbolism, we need to take into account the fact that this is not necessarily a genuine resurrection of symbol. For that to happen, its transcendental referent will have to be re-established, which appears not to be the case yet.

The renewal of interest in symbols, metaphors and models in Christian theology may contribute to an authentic restoration of the central role that symbolism has played in the life of humanity. This may very well be the basis for a new paradigm, which could eventually take us beyond the deadlock of modernity.

We are going to take this recovery of the symbolic universe and the consequent interest in the use of models for theological investigation as the foundation on which to develop our exploration of the trinitarian ecclesiology of Dumitru Staniloae with the help of the theological model that we are going to build.

2 Metaphors and Models in Theology

In view of the phenomenon of a partial recovery of religious symbolism in modernity, as described in the previous chapter, we will now attempt to establish the legitimacy and effectiveness of the use of metaphors and models in theological research.

Our starting presupposition, borrowed from Avis, is that 'Christianity is a faith that subsists in the symbolic realm and is appropriated through imaginative indwelling'.[100]

2.1 From Symbol to Metaphor

A symbol can be defined in simple terms as something (a sign, an image, an object) that stands for something else (an object, a being, a notion, an idea) based on analogical correspondence. According to Ricoeur, symbols differ from metaphors in that they have an essentially 'bound' character; they are bound to the configurations of the cosmos, while metaphors are the free inventions of a discourse.[101]

Thus, when we come to metaphor, we encounter an even greater difficulty than in the case of symbols.[102] This has to do both with the complexity of the concept and with the nature of language itself. Before analysing the nature of metaphor more extensively, we need to place before ourselves a general delineation of the concept. Like Gunton, in his discussion on metaphor,[103] we will use Aristotle's classic definition of metaphor as 'the application of an alien name by transference'.[104] Alternatively, and

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[100] P. Avis, *God and the Creative Imagination. Metaphor, Symbol and Myth in Religion and Theology* (London: Routledge, 1999) 7.

[101] Ricoeur, *Figuring the Sacred*, 53.

[102] Gunton mentions that I. Dalferth cited a book published in 1964, in the very early period of the debate, which contains no less than 125 definitions of metaphor. Gunton comments that 'metaphor is such a pervasive feature of our language that any tight definition would very likely exclude many respectable instances' (Gunton, *Atonement*, 27–28). Avadanei, in his turn, refers to a veritable western 'metaphoromania' which had already given birth to over 12,000 titles on this subject by the early nineties (p. 7–8).

[103] Gunton, *Atonement*, 24.

[104] Aristotle, *Poetics*, 1457b 7–8. A very interesting analysis of Aristotle's view of metaphor can be found in A. Marcos, 'The Tension between Aristotle's Theories and Uses of Metaphor', *Studies in History and Philosophy of Science*, 28, 1, 1997, 123–139.

more precisely: 'Metaphor consists in giving the thing a name that belongs to something else; the transference being either from genus to species, or from species to genus, or from species to species, or on grounds of analogy'.[105] From this simple definition, we notice that metaphor corresponds linguistically to the role played in epistemology by symbol.

2.1.1 The Nature of Metaphor

In what follows, we will try to delineate metaphor, a topic widely discussed in literary theory during the final decades of the twentieth century. Our discussion will deal with: (1) what makes it legitimate for us to describe the usage of a word as metaphorical; (2) the extent to which it is correct to identify the *locus* of metaphor in a word; (3) the difference between metaphors and similes; (4) the legitimacy of the statement: 'all language is metaphorical'.

Because of its intricacy, metaphor is not only difficult to define but also puzzling to describe. Here are a few significant attempts: 'Metaphor is the poet's way to try and define something for which there is no dictionary meaning'.[106] It is 'teaching an old word new tricks', 'a calculated category mistake', 'an affair between a predicate with a past and an object that yields while protesting'.[107] 'Metaphor is made possible by a feature transfer or by a category transfer'.[108] Metaphor happens when 'a term belonging somewhere else is used in an unusual context'.[109] 'Metaphor, like all comparisons, consists of two parts: the imprecise element which is to be explained, and the alien, surprising, incongruous, or unexpected element which is used to supply the explanation. The unexpectedness lies in the transfer of a linguistic label from a context where it is well understood to an alien context. The more alien and unexpected the context the more vivid the metaphor'.[110] Yet the most useful description for the purposes of the present study is the following: 'A memorable metaphor has the power to bring two separate domains into cognitive and emotional relation by using language directly

[105] Aristotle, *Poetics*, 21.

[106] S. TeSelle, *Speaking in Parables. A Study in Metaphor and Theology* (London: SCM, 1975) 39.

[107] N. Goodman, *Languages of Art. An Approach to a Theory of Symbols* (Oxford: OUP, 1969) 68, 73, 69.

[108] U. Eco, *Limitele interpretarii* (Constanta: Pontica, 1996) 167–168.

[109] Gunton, *Atonement*, 28.

[110] P. Cotterell and M. Turner, *Linguistics and Biblical Interpretation* (Downers Grove: IVP, 1989) 300.

appropriate to the one as a lens for seeing the other'.[111] Whatever difference we may find between these descriptions and definitions, the basic idea remains the same: metaphor has to do with an innovative use of language.

Black identifies two basic components in a metaphor: (1) the *focus* – the word or phrase that creates the metaphorical tension, and (2) the *frame* – the immediate linguistic context that is challenged by the metaphorical statement.[112] The context may be realistic, as in the metaphorical expression 'this man is a beast', or purely fictional, as in the metaphor 'the unicorns are candid flames in the woods'.[113] What makes both sentences metaphorical is not their relation to reality, which is different, but rather the tension between the dictionary meaning[114] of the focus and that of the context. The two semantic spheres do not really 'fit'. This, in turn, 'stretches' language, making it able to express new meanings it did not previously have. Indeed, in many ways, this is the main process through which language is enriched.

It is at this point that we have to ask how much of language is accounted for by metaphor. Some, like TeSelle, believe that all language is metaphorical. Thus, she says 'language, ordinary language, and not only the language of poets, is metaphorical'.[115] Working from the perspective of neuroscience, Arbib and Hesse argue that the human mind is particularly suited to the use of metaphorical language.[116] Moreover, linguists as Lakoff and Johnson believe that all human thinking is metaphorical.[117] However, in spite of its exotic appeal, we suggest that this position does not make much sense. We tend to agree with Clowney's statement that 'without an accepted order of reality to which conceptual language refers, the deviation that constitutes the metaphor could not

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[111] M. Black, *Models and Metaphors. Studies in Language and Philosophy* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1962) 236.

[112] Black, *Models*, 28. Using these terms, Black improves on the terminology suggested by I. A. Richards – 'tenor' for the word whose meaning is modified and 'vehicle' for the modifier – *The Philosophy of Rhetoric* (New York, 1965) 11, quoted in A. J. Burgess, 'Irreducible Religious Metaphors', *RS*, 8, 1972, 356.

[113] Eco, *Limitele*, 171.

[114] Eco describes this with the phrase 'encyclopaedic meaning' – *Limitele*, 171.

[115] TeSelle, *Speaking in Parables,* 51.

[116] M. A. Arbib and M. B. Hesse, *The Construction of Reality* (Cambridge: CUP, 1986), 150.

[117] G. Lakoff and M. Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: UCP, 1980) 183.

be recognised'.[118] Another important implication, to which Rikhof draws attention, is the impossibility of discerning between good and bad metaphors, given the implicit absence of criteria in a prevailingly metaphorical linguistic environment.[119]

Finally, it is important to mention that metaphor is not necessarily an intentional phenomenon. According to Eco, 'metaphorical interpretation occurs through the interaction of an interpreter and a metaphorical text, but this interpretation results both from the nature of the text and the general framework of encyclopaedic knowledge of a certain culture, and, in principle, it does not have anything to do with the author's intentions'.[120] Eco reiterates here his well-known conviction about what is usually called 'the death of the author in the text'. Be that as it may, the important implication of this statement for theology is, however, that, given the divine-human authorship of the Scriptures, the peculiar capacity of metaphor to exceed intentionality makes it particularly suited as a vehicle of biblical revelation and theological reflection.

2.1.2 Functions of Metaphor

Although metaphor plays a certain number of roles in the poetic, linguistic, scientific, philosophical and theological realms, we will restrict our discussion here to three that we consider to be the most important ones for our research.

(1) *The rhetorical function of metaphor*. Some authors, such as Hobbes, regard metaphor as a suspect use, if not a misuse, of language ('saying one thing and meaning another'). At best, they accept it as having a *stylistic* or simply an *emotive* role; at worst, they consider it deceptive and something to be avoided.[121] This understanding falls roughly under what has been called the 'substitution theory of metaphor',[122] which concentrates on particular words and 'makes a strong case for the definable meaning of metaphorical expressions'.[123] According to this theory, a proper handling of language is

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[118] E. P. Clowney, 'Interpreting the Biblical Models of the Church. A Hermeneutical Deepening of Ecclesiology', in D. A. Carson (ed.), *Biblical Interpretation and the Church. Text and Context* (Grand Rapids: Baker and Carlisle: Paternoster, 1984) 68.

[119] H. Rikhof, *The Concept of Church. A Methodological Inquiry into the Use of Metaphors in Ecclesiology* (London: Sheed and Ward and Shepherdstown: Patmos, 1981) 141.

[120] Eco, *Limitele*, 175.

[121] T. Hobbes, *Leviathan*, as quoted in Gunton, *Atonement*, 29.

[122] Black, *Models*, 31.

[123] Clowney, 'Models', 66.

characterised by the use of literal statements. We may want to use metaphorical 'embellishments' on certain occasions, yet there is always a better way of expressing things, i.e. of 'translating' them into literal, propositional terms.

Black illustrates an extreme example of this position in the person of the French physicist Pierre Duhem,[124] who treats the use of models and metaphors in science as 'an aberration of minds too feeble to think about abstractions without visual aids'.[125] Clark expresses a very similar position, this time in the realm of theology. According to him, 'what cannot be expressed clearly [i.e. propositionally] is not meaningful'.[126] A more nuanced position is expressed by the Catholic theologian Herwi Rikhof, who asserts that 'it is the task of theology to paraphrase metaphorical language in theoretical statements that unpack the cognitive content of the metaphorical descriptions'.[127] His position appears to be close to what Black calls a 'comparison view', in which metaphor is seen as a 'condensed or an elliptical *simile'*.[128] We may describe this as a 'reducible' metaphor, or an 'epiphor', as Weelwright calls it.[129] This is however nothing more than a modified version of the substitution theory.

There is a place for logic here. Were the substitutionary views warranted, why would anyone make metaphorical statements when 'plain' language would suffice? Clowney contends that the case for the definable meaning of metaphorical expressions is self-defeating, for it is implicitly a 'case against their necessity'. As he puts it, 'we

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[124] P. Duhem, *Le système du monde, histoire des doctrines cosmologiques de Platon à Copernic* (Paris: Hermann, 1954–1959). See also his work *The aim and structure of physical theory* (Princeton: PUP, 1954).

[125] Black, *Models*, 235.

[126] G. Clark, *Language and Theology* (Phillipsburg, NJ: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1980) 92. On p. 100 of the same book, Clark even goes so far as to say that the reason God gave us language is for 'conversing literally with God – as well as for counting sheep'.

[127] Quoted by Clowney, 'Models', 65.

[128] Black, *Models*, 35–37. The main weakness of this view, according to Black, is that 'it suffers from a vagueness that borders upon vacuity'.

[129] P. Weelwright, *Metaphor and Reality* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962) 57, quoted in E. R. MacCormac, 'Scientific and Religious Metaphors', *RS*, 11, 1975, 407. The author states that the 'epiphors' are rather 'expressive of experience', descriptive or analogical. There is however another type of metaphors that he calls 'diaphors'. These are rather 'suggestive of possibilities'. MacCormac explains further that 'some metaphors begin as diaphors, become epiphors when evidence or experience confirms their suggestion as plausible, and finally become part of ordinary language as dead metaphors'. However, 'other metaphors remain diaphors in that they suggest more than they express' (p. 408). It is mostly diaphors that we have in view in this study.

need only insert the language for which the metaphor is substituted and we have the meaning without the metaphor'.[130]

Black gives two possible reasons for using metaphors in a substitutionary manner. First, because 'there may, in fact, be no literal equivalent, *L*, available in the language in question'. The author understands metaphor in this case as 'a species of *catachresis'*, 'the use of a word in some new sense in order to remedy a gap in the vocabulary'. The result of this linguistic device is that 'the new sense introduced will quickly become part of the literal sense'.[131] Second, as we have already said, some writers may use metaphors for stylistic reasons, as mere 'decorations'. Such a choice, explains Black ironically, is made because

> …the reader is taken to enjoy problem-solving – or to delight in the author's skill at half-concealing, half-revealing his meaning. Or metaphors provide a shock of 'agreeable surprise' and so on. The principle behind these 'explanations' seems to be: When in doubt about some peculiarity of language, attribute its existence to the pleasure it gives a reader. A principle that has the merit of working well in default of any evidence.[132]

Even if Black is correct when he allows for a certain legitimacy of the rhetorical/substitutionary use of metaphor in literature, Clowney also appears to be right in stating that if this is its only function, then 'its use for scientific language may well be challenged'.[133]

The main implication of the substitution theory, even in its moderate version but particularly in its extreme form, is a denial of both the cognitive and the creative aspect of metaphor and thereby of any legitimacy for the use of metaphor in science. If this idea reflects the way things really are then in our encounter with metaphor we would not have to do with a creation of new meaning but only with a transfer or substitution of meaning. Black does not agree with this. He believes that 'we can comment *upon* the metaphor, but the metaphor itself neither needs nor invites explanation and paraphrase.

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[130] Clowney, 'Models', 66.

[131] Black, *Models*, 32–33.

[132] Black, *Models*, 34. By his negative appraisal of the stylistic understanding of metaphor, Black, it appears, intends to reject its exclusivity, rather than to downplay its importance. Actually, much of the expressiveness of metaphor comes from its undeniable aesthetic dimension.

[133] Clowney, 'Models', 66–67. See the example of Duhem quoted above.

Metaphorical thought is a distinctive mode of achieving insight, not to be construed as an ornamental substitute for plain thought'.[134] A larger apprehension of this reality may be the reason why the substitution theory fell more and more into disrepute, as modernism became outdated, although we cannot by any means say that it has disappeared completely.

Paul Ricoeur also strongly rejects the substitution theory of metaphor. He believes that it is not possible to dispense with metaphor. As Vanhoozer puts it, 'the meaning of the metaphor is always richer than our attempts to paraphrase it'[135]; furthermore, as Vanhoozer explains, Ricoeur opts for what Black labels the 'interaction theory of metaphor'. This involves, as explained earlier, two subjects: a 'principal' and a 'subsidiary'. The interaction mechanism consists, says Black, in the way that 'the metaphor selects, emphasises, suppresses and organises features of the principal subject by implying statements about it that normally apply to the subsidiary subject'.[136] Ricoeur's particular point in this discussion is that the metaphorical tension involved is created not so much at the level of words but of sentences and larger structures.[137]

Before going any further, let us elaborate briefly on what we perceive to be the danger of literalism.[138] We need to do this because the substitution view of metaphor leads naturally to literalism, understood as a tendency to reduce the meaning of metaphors to mere propositional statements. Avadanei argues that this happens when

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[134] Black, *Models*, 237.

[135] K. J. Vanhoozer, *Biblical Narrative in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur* (Cambridge: CUP, 1990) 64. The author calls this the "surplus" of meaning in the metaphor.

[136] Black, *Models*, 44–45. In spite of his obvious preference for the 'interaction view', the author does not appear to be willing to impose it on every metaphorical instance. He tends to allow space for substitution and comparison metaphors, but insists that only 'interaction metaphors' are 'of importance for philosophy', and presumably also for theology. In our opinion, for reasons of clarity it would be better to restrict the term 'metaphor' to cases of interaction, and call the others simply 'analogies' or 'similes'.

[137] Vanhoozer (*Biblical Narrative*, 63) believes that the most important contribution of Ricoeur to the theory of metaphor is to be found in his 'analysis of metaphor as a form of discourse'.

[138] Eliade is critical of the same tendency, which he observes in relation to symbol or image. 'To translate an image in concrete terminology, to reduce it to just one of its reference contexts is more serious than mutilating it; it means to annihilate it as a tool of cognition.' The reason for this is that 'when the spirit resorts to images in order to grasp the ultimate reality, it does so precisely inasmuch as this reality manifests itself ambiguously, and, as such, could not be expressed through concepts' (*Images*, 19). Nevertheless, he does not exclude conceptualisation completely. He believes there is certain 'logic of symbol'. Thus, 'certain groups of symbols prove to be coherent and interconnected; in other words, they can be expressed in a systematic manner, they can be translated in rational terms' (p. 45).

the two terms connected by the metaphor are not clearly differentiated. That is why he believes that

> …the force of [religious] metaphor as metaphor becomes greater in proportion as the distance between 'subject' and 'vehicle' becomes greater' – hence, certainly, the authority of Scripture. This distance can, however, be bridged and sustained only by a different sort of energy from one that is purely metaphorical and linguistic, and this comes through faith in the paradox of divine-human juxtaposition; it is for this very reason that the identification of God with the historic person of Christ or of his body and blood with the bread and wine (the great metaphors of the Bible) are distances of the figuration of language which are able to stretch the synapses to the maximum, without breaking them.[139]

Ricoeur believes that the inclination towards literalism, 'the myth of metaphor', is ingrained in metaphor itself: 'there is something in the use of metaphor that inclines it to abuse'.[140] What is this 'something'? It is precisely the fact that grammar does not help us in any way to distinguish between plain and metaphorical language.[141] 'There is no grammatical feature that distinguishes metaphorical attribution from literal attribution'.[142] This and other similar features make Black conclude that 'no doubt metaphors are dangerous – and perhaps especially so in philosophy. But a prohibition against their use would be a wilful and harmful restriction upon our powers of inquiry',[143] a statement which leads us naturally to the next function of metaphor.

(2) *The heuristic role of metaphor*. The capacity of metaphor to stimulate and mediate new discovery is more widely accepted today than any other functions it might fulfil. This is also Gunton's conviction. He makes so bold as to say that metaphor is not just *one* possible way, but 'perhaps *the* way in which the world as it exists "outside" the

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[139] Avadanei, 200.

[140] P. Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor. Multi-disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978) 251.

[141] Rikhof, being afraid that this ambiguity of metaphor is in danger of allowing things to escape from rational control, rejects the idea that in the case of metaphor the rules of language are violated, which, in his opinion, would lead to non-sense. He believes rather that those rules are just 'relaxed for that particular occasion' (*Concept*, 83).

[142] Ricoeur, *Rule*, 251–252. Black (*Models*, 28) agrees with this when he says that '"metaphor" must be classified as a term belonging to "semantics" and not to "syntax"'.

[143] Black, *Models*, 47.

mind of the observer is discovered and understood'.[144] Metaphor can mediate this kind of 'discovery' because, as Clowney rightly points out, 'it brings together two realms of concepts that the rules of language would normally keep distinct'.[145]

If we agree that metaphor mediates access to new knowledge we need to go on to ask whether, as Dalferth contends, metaphors are prerequisites for genuine discovery.[146] We believe that such a position introduces an unnecessary and unjustified dichotomy between language and the reality it seeks to describe. Language, including its metaphorical use, cannot precede our 'epistemic access' to new discovery, but is intimately united with the world it tries to depict. Obviously, the extent to which words suit the world they are trying to explore is a complex matter on which there is no consensus, and we suspect there never will be. Even if we take into consideration the 'confusion of languages' at Babel, and with it the inability of language to describe the world in absolute terms, it is still the only means we have to make some sense of reality. It is 'the articulate level of our multi-faceted relationship with the world about us, perhaps the highest feature of our indwelling of our environment'.[147]

In direct connection with the previous statements, we must also look at language in an eschatological perspective. Language, including its metaphorical dimension, necessarily involves a certain 'provisionality'. In one sense, this means that it is a mistake to ask too much of language. As Christians we are aware that until Jesus Christ returns our knowledge is only partial (1 Cor. 13:12). This means that until the consequences of the Fall are completely removed human language will not be able to adequately describe reality as it really is.

How then does metaphor give us epistemic access to the world? According to Vanhoozer it 'first challenges our ordinary conceptions of reality', then it extends our perception of truth beyond the empirical and, finally, it 'enlarges our vision of the world by expanding the real to include the "possible"'.[148] The implications of these statements

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[144] Gunton, *Atonement*, 40 (emphasis added).

[145] Clowney, 'Models', 71.

[146] I. U. Dalferth, *Religiöse Rede von Gott* (München: Christian Kaiser, 1981).

[147] Gunton, *Atonement*, 37, borrowing here with acknowledgement from Polanyi.

[148] Vanhoozer, *Biblical Narrative*, 40. On p. 68, the author states, in the same vein: 'while Ricoeur agrees that metaphors and poems initially break the relation between language and thing, he claims that the language – thing relationship is restored on a higher level'.

in terms of process and eschatology are obvious.[149] Ricoeur calls this 'the *ontological* function of metaphorical discourse, in which every dormant potentiality of existence appears as blossoming forth, every latent capacity for action as actualised'.[150] In this respect, we conceive the metaphorical 'is' as involving a paradoxical tension between 'is not' and 'is like' and as firmly denying the legitimacy of understanding metaphor as a merely fictional 'as if'.

Lewis[151] recognizes the complex nature of the matter under discussion. He suggests a number of distinctions that are useful for our discussion here. Firstly, he argues that we need to distinguish clearly between reality and truth. Reality is that which is 'out there' and has to be enjoyed, while truth is the linguistic 'contemplation' or 'reflection of reality'.[152] Lewis also distinguished between 'religious' speech (like that we find in the Bible) that is more akin to poetic language and 'theological' speech, which 'tends towards the scientific end of the spectrum'.[153] At the same time, 'Lewis stresses that the abstractions of theology are not literal speech, but simply more abstract metaphors. Thus, he does not give the more abstract speech of theology priority over the concrete religious speech of the Bible'.[154]

All that has been said thus far supports the notion that, arguably, we can identify correct and incorrect uses of language, and thus good and bad metaphors. In order to distinguish between them, however, we need a set of criteria. Vanhoozer puts it this way: 'the question is simply this. If metaphors are our only access to a redescription of the real, how can we know whether or not to believe the metaphor? If what the metaphor affirms cannot be checked by non-metaphorical means, how can we tell the

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[149] For Vanhoozer, 'metaphorical discourse is perhaps the most appropriate language with which to express an eschatological vision of the world' (*Biblical Narrative*, 71).

[150] Ricoeur, *Rule*, 307. 'Ricoeur', says Vanhoozer, discussing this same issue, 'has found the means for expressing the real in terms of the possible' (*Biblical Narrative*, 71).

[151] According to Macky, Lewis 'has probably written more extensively on metaphor and related subjects than any well-known Christian writer' in the twentieth century – P. W. Macky, 'The Role of Metaphor in Christian Thought and Experience as Understood by Gordon Clark and C. S. Lewis', *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* (CD-ROM edition, Lynchburg, Va.: Galaxie Software, 1998), 28, 3, 1981, 239. Lewis deals with this topic more or less incidentally in such works as *The Allegory of Love* (London: OUP, 1938), *God in the Dock* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1970), *Letters to Malcolm* (New York: Harcourt, 1963), *Surprised by Joy* (Glasgow: Collins, 1955), etc.

[152] C. S. Lewis, *Christian Reflections* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), 61.

[153] Lewis, *Reflections*, 129–141.

[154] Macky, 'Role of Metaphor, 245.

difference between a helpful and a misleading metaphor?'[155] Thus it appears that despite his brilliant rehabilitation of metaphor Ricoeur's suggestion for an 'existential verification' is not much more helpful than the same kind of criterion proposed by the adherents of the New Hermeneutic for the validation of models. As in the case of symbols, it appears that without a transcendent referent the problem is not really solved.

Directly related to the previous discussion is the issue of live or dead metaphors. We believe there is some justification for describing language as a 'graveyard of metaphors'. Many of the words we use today in a literal sense began their linguistic career as metaphors. As Gunton points out, *musculus* ('mouse' in Latin, meaning 'muscle' today) is probably the best-known example.[156] Is this good or bad? Alternatively, maybe this is not the right question. Why can we not just take it as the way things are or as the way language, as a living reality, enriches itself? Yet, more importantly, we have to observe that with time some metaphors lose their 'life' and become dull, inexpressive and unable to mediate discovery. The closest analogies that come to mind are those of a corpse – a body without a soul – or that of a church with a defective dynamic of the Holy Spirit. What appears to characterise both images is a weak or non-existent spirituality. This leads us to the last function of metaphor under discussion here.

(3) *Metaphor as vehicle of linguistic creativity*. Metaphorical language appears to express that dimension of the 'image of God' in the human being that we may call in general terms 'spirituality'.[157] The issue of *imago Dei* as a subtopic of Christian anthropology will be developed further in this thesis. Suffice it to mention here that Catholic theologians tend to present it as represented by human rationality, while Orthodox theologians tend to favour freedom as the main characteristic of the human

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[155] Vanhoozer, *Biblical Narrative*, 66. In his opinion, Ricoeur has a very optimistic view of metaphor; 'Metaphor for Ricoeur can apparently do no wrong' (p. 72). We cannot share this optimist conclusion because it introduces a sort of 'dualism' into the interpretation of metaphorical statements, according to which their literal meaning is false, while the metaphorical sense is the true one. To do this, says Soskice, is to ignore the actual context of the metaphorical discourse – Janet M. Soskice, *Metaphor and Religious Language* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1985) 84–90. Her solution to this problem is to conceive of the compatibility between polysemy and the unity of the referential intent.

[156] *Atonement*, 35.

[157] According to Vanhoozer, Ricoeur himself begins his philosophical anthropology with a study of human creativity, whose most striking expression is found in the use of language, and particularly metaphor (*Biblical Narrative*, 56).

being made in the image of God.[158] Whatever position we take on this issue, we end up with creativity ranking high on the list of human characteristics that we subsume under the rubric 'image of God'.[159] The creative capabilities of humans are expressed in the various ways we deal with creation, but even more fully in the way we handle one of the most precious gifts we have received from God, our ability to communicate through articulated language.

The creative use of language, and implicitly the ability to exploit the richness of metaphor as the main means of extending our communication capabilities and our understanding of reality, is thus an essential aspect of our makeup, as spiritual beings bearing the *imago Dei*.

If this analysis is correct, then we can rightly expect that a renewal of spirituality, an active presence of the Holy Spirit in a person or community, will bring about a renewal of language, an abundance of living metaphors. Conversely, a spiritual deficit will lead to linguistic stiffness, as happened in Eastern Europe during the reign of communist 'popular logocracies'.[160] Even today, fourteen years after the fall of the communist system, this spiritual deficit becomes obvious every time a neo-communist politician speaks in public, using the so-called 'wooden language',[161] the manipulative and meaningless verbiage of Marxist ideology.[162] It is characterised by: 'repetitiveness, redundancy, fixity of form, nominal cumulative syntax, lexical deficiency, if we remain on the formal realm, but also emptiness of referential content, or, finally, [its use as]

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[158] J. Zizioulas, *Creatia ca Euharistie* (Bucharest: Editura Bizantina, 1999) 73–80.

[159] See, J. Macquarrie, *In Search of Humanity: A Theological and Philosophical Approach* (New York: Crossroad, 1983) 24, who contends that the image of God in man is the mystery of creativity. Beisner agrees with him, when he lists creativity together with morality and reason as the three elements defining the image of God in human beings – E. C. Beisner, 'Imago Dei and the Population Debate', *TrinJ*, 18, 2, 1997, 183.

[160] Czeslaw Milosz used this phrase in *La pensée captive. Essai sur les logocracies populaires* (Paris: Gallimard, 1953).

[161] From the French *langue de bois*, used by Thom in one of the best monographs available on this subject as a description of the degraded language used by communist ideologists – F. Thom, *Limba de lemn* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1993).

[162] By ideology we mean here a quasi-gnostic system of thought that aims to establish a sort of scientific soteriology. For a more comprehensive definition see A. Besançon, *Les origines intellectuelles du léninisme* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1977) 352–358.

instrument of dissimulation, of disguise, of dual personality, of usurpation'.[163] This is true not only about Marxism, but about any ideology, as Liiceanu suggests when he asks himself: 'Is not the whole of History the story of our linguistic fall…? Is not the disorder in our rapport with the word (which is [the essence of] ideology) the ultimate source of systematic manslaughter?'[164]

Orwell was among the first authors to address the pathological dimension of this phenomenon that he called 'newspeak'.[165] He is also the originator of an ideological model for the analysis of the 'wooden language', according to which the degradation of language is the sign of degraded thinking, under the oppression of ideology.[166]

A second possible explanation for the genesis of the 'wooden language' is offered by the strictly deterministic 'culturalistic model' of Sapir and Whorf.[167] According to this hypothesis, language and thinking are strictly interdependent. Thus, if two peoples speak similar languages, they will think alike. The opposite would also be true. Moreover, even if language does not create a separate reality, it filters our perception of reality. Thus, in communist contexts, since the Party controls language, it can use it to control the consciousness of the people and even to model reality, at least to a certain extent.

The third approach, called the 'linguistic model', is based on semiotics and extends the concept to contexts other than those dominated by the communist ideology. According to Antohi, the great disadvantage of this semiotic model is that it fragments

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[163] P. Fiala *et al*, 'Présentation', *Mots. Les langages du politique*, 21 December 1989, 4, as quoted in S. Antohi, 'Limba, discurs, societate: proba limbii de lemn' in F. Thom, *Limba de lemn* (Bucharest: Humanitas, 1993) 17.

[164] G. Liiceanu, *Usa interzisa* (Bucuresti: Humanitas, 2002) 98.

[165] G. Orwell, 'Politics and the English Language', published for the first time in 1946 in the London monthly *Horizon*, and 'Principles of Newspeak', published in 1949 as an appendix to the same author's celebrated novel *Nineteen Eighty Four*.

[166] According to Antohi ('Limba', 8), Orwell is quite deterministic in this model, although he appears somewhat undecided between linguistic determinism (language precedes and determines thinking) and instrumentalism (language is mimetic, 'copying' reality).

[167] E. Sapir, *Language* (New York: Harcourt, Brace and World, 1921) and B. L. Whorf, *Language, Thought and Reality* (Cambridge, Mass.: MIT, 1964).

the subject of study into 'isolated instances having a certain descriptive relevance, but with no significance for political analysis'.[168]

It is beyond any doubt that this 'wooden language' functioned as an ideological instrument in communist societies. Thom suggests that in the same manner in which the institutional church controlled by the communist state served as an instrument for the destruction of religion, this 'false language blocks communication and freezes the formation of a civil society that would endanger the communist power'; it 'tends to drown originality, or rather to interpose between that and the conscience, being afraid that it will move the spirit in unideological directions'. [169]

There has been much discussion in post-communist societies concerning the best means of addressing this linguistic pathology, which gives expression to the spiritual morbidity of communist ideology. According to Antohi, this effort should include the struggle for denotation, the systematic evacuation of the *pathos*, the development of a pluralism of discourse, a constant connection with reality and the exposure of every attempt at distorting it ideologically.[170] The solution we would like to add to these, in the light of the considerations expressed above, is that of a spiritual renewal, both in the wider and the narrower senses, of the post-communist societies, in which theological discourse would be called upon to play a central role.

However, after modernity, with its quasi-religious emphasis on the role of science, it is impossible to conceive of a coherent development of theology without reference to science. We could hardly find a better example of this interference than in the current discussions on metaphor. Therefore, it is to the status of metaphors in science and theology that we now turn.

2.1.3 Metaphors in Science and Theology

In spite of popular ideas concerning the objective and propositional character of science, it is widely accepted today that progress in scientific knowledge is dependent upon the imaginative deployment of scientific metaphors by the practitioners of science. One

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[168] Antohi, 'Limba', 20. The author somewhat ironically describes this theory as 'a new triumph of academic linguistic professionalism', the only problem being that 'the wooden language exceeds the boundaries of this discipline'.

[169] Thom, *Limba*, 224–225.

[170] Antohi, 'Limba', 23.

author goes so far as to say that most scientific disciplines 'depend on the epistemic indispensability of metaphor, to such an extent that today one feels obliged to speak in terms of a rhetoric or pragmatics of science'.[171] Black, similarly, observes that 'perhaps every science must start with metaphor and end with algebra; and perhaps without the metaphor there would never have been any algebra'.[172]

The same appears to be true for theology. As it tries to speak meaningfully about a mysterious reality that far transcends the limitations of reason and language alike, theology receives great help from metaphor. This extraordinary tool plays the role of a strange bridge with only one end, which is able to extend our understanding of God into previously unknown territory. This does not however mean that metaphor is the only instrument available for theological enquiry.

We have argued that to consider all language as metaphorical is self-defeating. Nevertheless, some authors believe that even if this appears to be true for language in general, theological language is necessarily metaphorical in nature.[173] We believe that such a position is incompatible with the reality of revelation and especially Incarnation. Clowney takes it to be a reflex of post-Kantian theological thinking, according to which 'our language for describing the noumenal cannot operate with the categories used by scientific thought in analysing the phenomenal world'. Nevertheless, continues Clowney,

> Kantian dualism has broken down from both sides. On the one side, theological liberalism has made painfully evident the consequences of divorcing Christian faith from scientific fact and historical understanding. Christian belief hangs upon the truth-claim made for the physical resurrection of Jesus Christ. On the other side, the positivistic understanding of Newtonian physics has dissolved. [174]

What, then, makes theological language distinctive? Frame believes its peculiarity does not come so much from its particular 'object' of study, but from the fact

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[171] Avadanei, 216.

[172] Black, *Models*, 242

[173] The author speaks of 'the necessarily symbolical character of all theological language' – A. Richardson, *Introduction to the Theology of the New Testament* (London: SCM, 1958) 257.

[174] Clowney, 'Models', 68.

that 'it is presuppositional, and thus demands authority over all life'.[175] One of the most important implications of this statement is that theological metaphors establish their meaning not 'from below', immanently, but 'from above', in a revelatory manner. Gunton calls this the 'revelatory function of [religious] metaphor'. He states that 'there are certain words in common use whose real and primary meaning is only revealed when we understand their use in theology'.[176]

Before going any further, we need to deal with another issue closely related to the use of metaphors in religious and theological language. A number of authors, as diverse as Eliade,[177] Minear[178] and TeSelle[179] emphasise the undeniable fact that primitive cultures, including the ones that gave birth to the Judeo-Christian holy writings, reflect a symbolic and pre-scientific understanding of reality. Yet what these and other authors do with this insight differs greatly. Some use it to despise the alleged inability of 'primitive' cultures to handle abstract thinking, a position counteracted successfully by both anthropologists[180] and biblical scholars.[181] Others, by far the majority, consider the dichotomy between the logical and imagistic types of thinking to be illegitimate. According to them, to be human means to be able to use both types of reasoning. Consequently, there is nothing wrong with using metaphors in theology. In fact this is not only desirable; it is unavoidable.

We may conclude, then, that metaphor is not merely a rhetorical literary device or an expression of human creativity. It is also a heuristic instrument useful in both science and theology.

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[175] J. F. Frame, *Christianity and the Great Debates*, course syllabus (Philadelphia: Westminster Theological Seminary, *n.d.*) as quoted in Clowney, 'Models', 69.

[176] Gunton, *Atonement*, 51.

[177] 'Symbolic thinking… is consubstantial with human existence; it comes before language and discursive reason', Eliade, *Images*, 12.

[178] 'The archaic mythology of the New Testament with its fantastic concepts of heaven, the angels, the demons, and hell – all [are] repugnant to the scientific views of modern churchgoers' – P. Minear, *Images of the Church in the New Testament* (London: Lutterworth, 1961) 17.

[179] 'We are always children, primitives, when it comes to new insight into such matters as love, life, death, God, hope, and faith' – TeSelle, *Speaking in Parables,* 41

[180] P. Radin, *Primitive Man as Philosopher* (New York, 1927), and Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Savage Mind* (Chicago, 1966).

[181] See, for instance J. Barr's discussion on *dabar*, in *The Semantics of Biblical Language* (London: SCM, 1961) 129–140.

At this point, we need to make an additional exploration in order to understand what it is that connects metaphors and models as instruments of investigation, and then to establish to what extent it is legitimate to use models in developing our theological understanding.

2.2 From Metaphors to Models

How, then, is metaphor related to model? We must begin by stating that there is no general agreement on this matter. Undoubtedly, metaphor and model are closely related. In one sense, we may say with Soskice that 'metaphors arise when we speak on the basis of models', and that the linguistic presentation of a model can take a metaphorical form.[182]

Some, like Black, Barbour and Ferré,[183] tend to conflate the two concepts, in spite of the superficial differences they allow between them. Soskice argues, however, that they often do so 'to the detriment of an account of metaphor'.[184] Others, like Rikhof, insist that for reasons of clarity we need to keep model and metaphor separate,[185] since in fact they are different, at least in relation to the vehicle they use for communicating their meaning. Thus, while metaphor is a linguistic tool used for 'speaking about one thing or state of affairs in terms suggestive of another, a model need not be linguistic at all'.[186] LaCugna expresses a similar position. She defines theological model as 'a metaphor that has been extended and made relatively permanent… a heuristic device which enables us to think and talk about a complex reality that cannot directly be observed.'[187]

Alternatively, in the words of Ricoeur, 'metaphor is to poetic language what the model is to scientific language. Now, in scientific language the model is essentially a

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[182] Soskice calls this, following R. Boyd, a 'theory-constitutive metaphor' (*Metaphor*, 102).

[183] M. Black, *Models and Metaphors. Studies in Language and Philosophy* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1962); I. G. Barbour, *Myth, Models and Paradigms. The Nature of Scientific and Religious Language* (London: SCM, 1974); F. Ferré, *Basic Modern Philosophy of Religion* (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1968). In spite of their basic agreement on this matter, these authors certainly have their differences and disagreements in terms of the overlap of model and metaphor.

[184] Soskice, *Metaphor*, 101.

[185] Rikhof, *Concept*, 159.

[186] Soskice, *Metaphor*, 101.

[187] C. M. LaCugna, 'Re-conceiving the Trinity as the Mystery of Salvation', *SJT*, 38, 1985, 12.

heuristic instrument that seeks, by means of fiction, to break down an inadequate interpretation and to pave the way for a new, more adequate interpretation'.[188]

In conclusion, in spite of their similarity and semantic overlap we need to make a methodological distinction between metaphor as a linguistic reality and model as a heuristic instrument for science and philosophy as well as theology. However, how distinct we should keep the two is open to discussion.

At the same time, we need to observe that some metaphors can function as models when they come to organise and redescribe a certain reality by use of analogy. The analogy provides a new perspective on known data and allows new data (and connections of data) to be perceived. It offers a simplified structure that stimulates new discovery and a fresh understanding for a specific domain of study. Such a possible function for models makes them vital instruments for theology, where the complexity of the concepts and their respective relations demand the use of adequate heuristic tools.

Given the present degree of interaction between science and theology, it is necessary to examine the role that models play in developing scientific theories before analysing the place of models in theology.

2.2.1 The Use of Models in Science

The development of modern theories of knowledge in the twentieth century provides a fascinating insight not only into the philosophy of science but also into theology. Hans Küng[189] talks about three phases in this evolution: (1) The first phase consists in the thesis of *logical positivism*, upheld by the Vienna Circle (Schlick and Carnap), which suggests that a positive verification of all legitimate scientific propositions is possible and necessary for true science. (2) The '*logical-critical*' or '*linguistic analysis*' thesis (we may also call it the *theory of falsification*) constitutes the second phase. It was introduced by Popper[190] and it denies that a positive verification of scientific theories is possible, asserting at the same time that their truth can be established only to the extent that they cannot be refuted or 'falsified' under the trial of experimental test.

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[188] Ricoeur, *Rule*, 240. The author believes that the exact analogue to model in poetic language is not the simple metaphorical statement, but the extended metaphor, i.e. the tale or allegory.

[189] H. Küng, 'Paradigm Change in Theology: A Proposal for Discussion' in H. Küng and D. Tracy, *Paradigm Change in Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1998) 5–6.

[190] Popper presents this theory in his book *The Logic of Scientific Discovery*, published in 1935.

Consequently, says Küng, 'science appears to be a continually ongoing process of 'trial and error', which leads, not to a secure *possession* of the truth, but to a progressive *approach* to the truth'. (3) The *paradigm-change* theory, formulated by Kuhn[191] is the latest stage in this process. It contends that 'logical-critical penetration is not sufficient' for establishing truth. 'Historical-hermeneutical examination' and 'psychological-sociological investigation' are also necessary. Consequently, scientific investigation is 'neither completely rational, nor completely irrational, and is often more revolutionary than evolutionary'. The result is 'an investigation of knowledge which represents a combination of *theory* of knowledge, *history* of knowledge and *sociology* of knowledge'.[192] The main players are now history, community and the human subject, all three also extremely important factors in any theological investigation.

Kuhn's theory, together with other recent developments in various disciplines, has made an important contribution in establishing the legitimacy of using metaphors and models as a means of scientific, philosophical and theological investigation. Consequently, following the pattern established by Kuhn, Oss states that 'a model gives us our global view of things; it shapes the very way in which we perceive and interpret data. Indeed, our theological and philosophical meta-structure provides us with an ultimate framework for interpreting the world'.[193]

As in the case of metaphors, however, not everyone is happy with what in positivist jargon may be called the 'devious and artificial procedure' of using models in science.[194] We may ask then why science, or philosophy and theology for that matter, needs to use models at all. Some scientists believe that models are helpful only for explaining formal scientific complexities to the layperson. This would make models a mere disposable tool. Others consider that they are useful in the process of investigation because they replace abstractions by something visual. At the same time, pictures are not necessarily helpful in research. They may, in fact, just as easily obscure facts as illuminate them. Nevertheless, most philosophers of science today agree with Black that models are an indispensable element in the process of scientific discovery and theory

[191] Kuhn, *Structure*.

[192] Küng, 'Paradigm Change', 6–7.

[193] D. A. Oss, 'The Influence of Hermeneutical Frameworks in the Theonomy Debate', *WTJ*, 51, 2, 1989, 229.

[194] Black, *Models*, 231.

building. It appears reasonable to believe that even 'the severest critic of the method will have to concede that recourse to models yields results'.[195] Thus, according to Ferré, the use of a model (1) '*simplifies* the data at hand'; (2) 'filters facts'; (3) presupposes a certain 'freedom from commitment to any theory grounded in the model's original domain'.[196]

The relevant literature tries to systematise scientific models according to a variety of ordering criteria. Max Black talks about three basic types of models used in science: (1) *scale models* – representations of a real or imaginary thing; imitations which take account of the principle of proportionality, where only certain properties of the original are selected – their purpose is to show the way things look and work; (2) *analogue models* – 'certain material objects, systems, or processes designed to reproduce as faithfully as possible in some new medium the *structure* or web of relationships of the original'; and (3) *theoretical models* – 'redescriptions' of a certain field of investigation (where '*some* facts and regularities have been established') with the help of some entities 'belonging to a relatively unproblematic, more familiar, or better-organised secondary domain', according to a set of 'rules of correlation'. In this respect, 'a promising model is one with implications rich enough to suggest novel hypotheses and speculations in the primary field of investigations'.[197] Given the fact that in theology we cannot create or work with either scale or analogue models, the theoretical model is the only one that really interests us here.

Taking into consideration the extent of the problematic that theoretical models attempt to cover, Küng[198] has distinguished among them three basic types: (1) *macro-models* – general constructs that try to give an account of the structural relations of a whole discipline, like the Einsteinian model in physics or the Augustinian system in theology; (2) *meso-models* – theoretical attempts at describing 'intermediate fields', like the wave theory of light or the 'psychological' model of the Trinity; and (3) *micro-*

[195] Black, *Models*, 231.

[196] F. Ferré, 'Mapping the Logic of Models in Science and Theology', *Christian Scholar*, 46, 1963,

[197] Black, *Models*, 220–233. In the same section Black also describes the particular case of *mathematical models* – projections of a certain field or phenomenon 'upon the domain of sets, functions, and the like that is the subject matter of the correlated mathematical theory' – but he takes this to be simply a digression.

[198] Küng, 'Paradigm Change', 9–10.

models – instruments that try to offer detailed solutions to strictly delimited problems of a certain discipline, like X-rays in physics or *filioque* in the theology of the Holy Spirit.

What we are attempting to do in the present work is to delineate a meso theoretical model to be applied to theology or more precisely to ecclesiology. We will call this *a perichoretic model of the Church*. This, we believe, could prove to be an extremely valuable instrument for disclosing the degree of consistency of any trinitarian ecclesiology, our particular concern here being the trinitarian ecclesiology of Dumitru Staniloae.

Before going any further, we need to establish the legitimacy of the use of theoretical models in theology in general and in ecclesiology in particular.

2.2.2 Models in Science and Theology. A Comparison

Following Kuhn's seminal work on paradigm changes in science, theologians have begun to use the concept of model increasingly in developing their theoretical constructs.

Janet Soskice has suggested a number of points of comparison between science and theology in terms of their use of models: (1) both theology and science 'consider one entity in terms of another'; (2) both rely on a multiplicity of models, each having a 'partial adequacy in describing the subject'; and (3) in both disciplines, models are used 'to make sense of complex areas'.[199] To these, Ferré adds a number of other common features; (4) 'that any model *models something else* to better or worse effect'; (5) 'that any model is offered *within a context* and *for a purpose*'; (6) 'that these purposes even for the same model may not always be the same in different contexts'; (7) 'that different purposes lead to different characteristics of models being taken as "logically relevant" or "irrelevant"'; (8) 'that models have heuristic value in formulating theories; and, finally (9) 'that any use of models involves certain risks'.[200]

Although we are aware that the use of models in theology has not gone unchallenged,[201] we intend to structure the rest of our research on the assumption that

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[199] Soskice, *Metaphor*, 104–106.

[200] Ferré, 'Mapping', 32.

[201] According to Frederick Ferré ('Mapping', 17), 'there are those who insist that models are dangerous, others who consider them helpful but inessential, and still others who defend their employment as both

the notion of model 'should be recognised as of central importance to theologians and philosophers of religion.'[202] Many authors share this presupposition today. John Goldingay, for instance, justifies the recourse to models in theology in the following manner:

> Doctrinal thinking commonly involves the use of models. The task of doctrine is to aid our understanding of key realities of Christian faith such as God, salvation, the Church, and the Bible. Many of these realities are by their very nature formidably deep and complex. A model is an image or construct that helps us grasp aspects of these realities by providing us with something we can understand that has points of comparison with the object we wish to understand, thus helping us get our mind round its nature.[203]

Goldingay is not the only author to use such parallels and arguments in order to defend the use of models in theology.[204] In the case of some of these, however, such strategies are based on a scientistic presupposition, according to which, if science herself is using models as a tool, then theology is justified in using them, too. These same authors, whom we may call non-cognitivists,[205] are nevertheless quick to point out that the two differ in at least two essential ways: in terms of referentiality and in the degree of their dispensability. Certainly, science and theology cover sufficiently different areas as to warrant a certain caution when transferring concepts from one to the other. However do science and religion really differ in terms of their referentiality and dispensability? We think we have reasons to believe that they do not. Let us analyse these concepts individually.

(1) *Referentiality*. When we asserted earlier that the discussions on metaphor, which have been going on for about four decades now, are centred on the nature of language, we meant that they involve issues related to truth and reference.[206] This entails, among other matters, the need to take account of the extent to which language is, borrowing

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rational and crucially important'. Even though he is referring to the use of models in general, we believe the statement holds true also for theology.

[202] Ferré, 'Mapping', 9.

[203] J. Goldingay, *Models for Scripture* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994) 7.

[204] As we have stated already and will continue to explore in what follows, authors as diverse as Ricoeur, Soskice, McFague and Ferré are all favourable in one way or another to the use of models in theology.

[205] This group includes such authors as Ferré and McFague.

[206] Soskice, *Metaphor*, 97.

Soskice's phrase, 'reality depicting'. Yet the question of referentiality is not equally acute in every metaphorical instance. Soskice believes that reference does not constitute a problem for those metaphors, and models, that have to do with 'tangible entities'. Things however become more complicated when we are dealing with phrases such as 'moral vision' or 'magnetic field'. By uttering them, we are in fact making statements and attempting to offer 'descriptions' of something that is beyond our reach. Nevertheless, even in this case, thinks Soskice, such metaphors do not present a difficulty for those who are concerned exclusively with the meaning of discourse as an autonomous, non-referential reality. This is obviously easier for the literary critic than for the physicist and the theologian.[207]

We may rightly ask at this point, what we mean by reference and how do metaphors and models 'refer'. Gunton formulates his answer to these questions in the following manner:

> In general, to refer is to fix something by means of language so that it may be recognised, described, examined, investigated, etc… If we fix the meaning of a thing metaphorically… we do two things. First, we use a word in such a way that we can begin to talk and think about it. Second, in the process, we enable the meaning of the language to change as it is adapted to those features of the world which we hope it will help us to understand…[208]

While non-cognitivists approach the issue of the use of models in science with an enthusiastic and uncritical realism, they tend to think that theological models and metaphors cannot specify their referent independently of other models and metaphors.[209] In other words, the meaning of the discourse is confined by the 'language game' of the 'text' itself, as in structuralism, or is actually either simply non-existent or a question of absolute relativity, as in deconstruction. Such a position can clearly be described as idealistic.

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[207] Some theologians take this approach, as we can observe particularly in the hermeneutical approach to parables of such authors as D. Crossan, S. TeSelle and D. Via, who follow in their works the tradition of E. Fuchs and J. Jeremias (Soskice, *Metaphor*, 98; see also n. 4, p. 173).

[208] Gunton, *Atonement*, 43.

[209] Ferré is a good example in this respect, as well as McFague, whose main weakness, according to Gunton, is 'her continual dependence upon an old theory of meaning, according to which "literal" language is language that "mirrors" reality' (Gunton, *Atonement*, 41, n. 2).

One reason for this collapse into idealism appears to be 'theology's continuing captivity to Kantian theories of knowledge', according to which 'our descriptive words speak only of the phenomenal world… Anything beyond that is [considered] subjective'.[210] Another possible reason has to do with the different ways language relates to the natural world and to metaphysics. Thus, while scientific models are perceived as heuristic and cognitive in the true sense of the word, the idealist describes religious models as having a mere emotive or evocative character.

Is this however a legitimate dichotomy? We believe it is not. There is no necessary disjunction or contradiction between emotions and cognition (such a claim is nothing but another rationalist myth) but rather an undeniable complementarity. In fact, emotions can enhance understanding (though they do not always do so), while, at the same time, something moves our emotions only to the extent that we have a certain understanding of it, whether conscious or unconscious. In our opinion, this justifies the primacy of the explanatory function of models. Soskice is right, then, when she asserts that 'the model [be it scientific or religious] can only be affective because it is taken as explanatory'. Were this not so, 'we would have no right to call them models at all. It would be much better in this case to abandon the idea of religious models altogether'.[211]

Nevertheless, not all authors go so far as to deny the epistemological dimension of the models, thus doing away with the question of reference. TeSelle appears to be in agreement with Soskice when she says that 'metaphors [as well as models] are not only emotional; they are also cognitive'.[212] By this she affirms the explanatory function of models. However, this does not mean that she is at the same time conceiving metaphor/model as 'reality depicting', as becomes obvious from the following statement:

> …if all thought is metaphorical [which the author believes to be the case], then we must acknowledge the open-endedness, the risk, and the tentativeness of all our interpretations. This means we cannot say our metaphors 'correspond' to 'what is'; at best, we can say that they seem appropriate to our experience, they 'fit' or seem 'right'. That such a situation is one of dis-ease is obvious, and it is tempting to try

[210] Gunton, *Atonement*, 41.

[211] Soskice, *Metaphor*, 109.

[212] TeSelle, *Speaking in Parables,* 44. Moreover, the author goes as far as saying that 'all human discovery is by metaphor' (p. 58).

> to escape such uncertainty through either literalism or subjectivity. But if metaphor is at the root of language and thought, then there is no escape. And this means, of course, no escape for religious and theological language and thought as well.[213]

Several authors in the existentialist and New Hermeneutic schools, such as Tracy,[214] are similarly not ready to do away with the question of reference. What they tend to do, however, is to resolve it within the sphere of human experience.[215]

However, even if idealists and existentialists differ greatly in their account of theological models, they appear to have something essential in common: both try to justify the appeal to models in theology, while denying the possibility for theological discourse of making any justifiable transcendental claims.

Yet is the appeal to experience indeed a solution to the problem of reference? It is true that 'Christian theology must challenge all immanentism'; and, 'from the assumption that human experience must be our only starting point we cannot give an account of either that experience or of the God who gives it'.[216] Gunton appears to argue for a similar point of view when he states:

> Unless some account is attempted on the relation of our language to the real world – and that is not the same as a quest for some neutral 'foundation' outside the language – it may appear that we are *merely* telling stories. The primary way of fixing our reference of God is, indeed, through the telling of the biblical narratives in the light of previous uses of them by the Christian community.[217]

Soskice herself follows basically the same line of thought when she argues that 'by speaking of the referents of the theist's models as Christian experience of radical faith and fundamental trust, we do not solve the problem of reference but simply force it to a different level'. The transcendental reference being non-existent, there is no

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[213] TeSelle, *Speaking in Parables,* 51–52. She asserts the same idea earlier on in her book, when she says, quoting Ramsey in her favour, that: 'metaphor belongs more in the realm of faith and hope than in the realm of knowledge' (p. 44), to which we can rightly ask, with Soskice (*Metaphor*, 106): Faith/hope in what?

[214] D. Tracy, 'Metaphor and Religion' in S Sachs (ed.), *On Metaphor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979).

[215] Avadanei appears to be in agreement with this dichotomous position when he says that 'scientific models are used as explanatory steps, while the religious model – the 'human' phenomenon – finds its value in its own existential content' (p. 198).

[216] Clowney, 'Models', 69.

[217] Gunton, *Atonement*, 46–47.

justifiable ground for the faith that is predicated. By failing 'to take sufficient account of the problem of reality depicting', this position makes the comparison of models of science and theological models really a 'nonsense'. In such a case, the author states again, 'it would be better to abandon talk of models in religious language altogether, as well as any hope for an illuminating comparison with the models of science'.[218]

The solution to the dilemma presented above may well be what Soskice calls 'transcendental realism', a position maintaining that theological models 'refer' to God in actual terms, without claiming that they directly describe God. By this, we do not mean that referentiality works the same way in science as in theology. As already mentioned, we cannot 'refer' to the material dimension of reality in the same way as we do with transcendence. Nevertheless, because of revelation in general, and Incarnation in particular, theology is freed from the closed system of a religious language-game and is able to speak meaningfully about the God who disclosed himself in the person of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Religious metaphors, as well as models, evince an undeniable aesthetic dimension and unparalleled capacities to describe and even generate moments of insight. Glenn also insists that 'the whole purpose of models is to cause a disclosure of truth – spiritual discernment… This insight is not necessarily knowledge of new facts; it is primarily awareness of knowledge already present but not relevant or existentially meaningful'.[219] Although this statement is indeed worth taking into consideration, it appears to angle things subtly in the direction of the experiential validation that we have discussed above. However, if theological models are to maintain the role assigned to them by the Christian tradition, i.e. of being a God-given (or God-inspired) means of orientation in this world,

> …they can do so only if they also provide reasons for that orientation. If they explain nothing, they provide no basis for any response, religious or moral. Typically, Christians respond to the models of their religious tradition not because they take them to be elegant and compelling means of describing the human

[218] Soskice, *Metaphor*, 106–107.

[219] A. A. Glenn, 'Criteria for Theological Models', *SJT*, 25, 1972, 296.

condition, but because they believe them in some way to depict states and relations of a transcendental kind.[220]

We conclude then that the issue of referentiality is as essential for the *theological* use of models, as it is for scientific models. Further, we need to add that the question is not actually solved by an idealist approach to models or by having recourse to experience. The solution can be grounded only in realist terms, however much this appears to some 'not only unmodern and confused, but also unspiritual'.[221]

Let us now approach the other alleged difference between scientific and theological models.

(2) *Dispensability*. The basic statement related to this supposed difference is that the models of science are dispensable, whereas those of religion are not. This means that in science, models are necessary for building theories, but afterwards we can dispense with them without any loss. By contrast, religious models are supposedly indispensable, given the close inter-connectedness of model and theory. Such a position is based, according to Soskice, on unacceptable empiricist presuppositions.[222]

Actually, even in science we cannot easily separate models from their corresponding theories. Moreover, the idea that models are necessary tools, to be dispensed with after a theory is formulated, is unwarranted in the contemporary philosophy of science. It would be possible only if such a thing as 'pure theory' existed. This makes Soskice assert: 'on any satisfactory account of scientific practice, it appears we cannot easily separate the model from the theory. The model or analogue forms the

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[220] Soskice, *Metaphor*, 112. As we can understand from the previous quotation, both this author and Professor Gunton find it important to underline the essential role that Christian tradition should play in establishing the ground for biblical realism.

[221] Soskice, *Metaphor*, 109, alludes here to Crossan, and probably also to Cupitt.

[222] Soskice argues that authors like Ramsey and Ferré have imported uncritically into their works the empiricism of Braithwaite, which in her opinion does not fit our present 'post-logical positivist era'. She goes on to quote in her support J. J. C. Smart, in whose opinion 'a theory that can be formulated without a model is a dead theory' (*Metaphor*, 113). Nevertheless, empiricism may be useful in an attempt to establish some kind of reference (though devoid of any transcendental content), but it cannot justify the theological use of the models whose grounding it tries to establish. Consequently, the approach described above leads to unavoidable contradictions. This leads Soskice to point out: 'Ramsey can elaborate his account in terms of models only by dispensing with his empiricism, yet he can ground the disclosures in which the models are theoretically based only by retaining it. Many of the inconsistencies of his programme arise from this desire to incorporate metaphysical claims in an empiricist framework.' (*Metaphor*, 147).

living part of the theory, the cutting edge of its projective capacity and, hence, is indispensable for explanatory and predictive purposes'.[223]

Given the constant progress in scientific knowledge, there is a sense in which we can say that scientific models, as well as theories, are dispensable. This happens however only when they are replaced with models and theories providing more adequate explanations of observed data. This is possible, because they do not claim to be absolute, even if they attempt to describe reality as it actually is. It is exactly at this point that scientific and theological models meet. The reason they work the same way in terms of their dispensability, as well as indispensability, is that both are paramorphic (the model is of a different 'substance' from the reality it represents, as opposed to isomorphic or scale models).

However, unlike their scientific counterparts, theological models attempt to give an account of the nature of ultimate reality. As such, they can be called 'metaphysical models'. Their use may be seen as an expression of 'the quest for a unity and coherence in the biblical account as a whole, which can bring together into a simple focus what might otherwise seem a sheer, vast multiplicity'.[224]

It may be argued, nevertheless, that theological models tend to be more stable than the scientific ones.[225] There are several possible reasons for this: (1) Religious communities manifest a traditional conservatism that is not easily inclined to change. (2) Religious models are often suggested in the biblical writings and/or deeply rooted in the tradition of the Christian community, which leads to a certain inflexibility in its willingness to contemplate changing them. (3) Any paradigm change in theology has major existential implications, much greater than any paradigm change in science could ever have. Nevertheless, even if all this is true, the history of theology in the last two centuries indicates that theological models are as dispensable as scientific ones. This is how one author summarises the issue at stake here:

> Actually, theology of course is also a science, differing from the natural and social sciences only with respect to the data it seeks to explain. Theology seeks to explain

[223] Soskice, *Metaphor*, 115.

[224] Ferré, 'Mapping', 25.

[225] The paradigm theory of Thomas Kuhn appears to indicate however that scientific super-theories tend to be almost as obstinate in their resistance to change as religious ones.

> the data of Scripture by such conceptual models as the Trinity, the hypostatic union, original sin and biblical inerrancy. Insofar as these concepts are not literal translations of any one passage but general models for explaining many pieces of Scriptural data, they are not necessarily infallible. Yet insofar as they, upon repeated theological testing, well explain all relevant data of Scripture, we gain confidence in them as true and reliable human perceptions of God's truth. The same is true of conceptual models in the natural and social sciences. All sciences (including theology) are fallible human undertakings, and their work is answerable to the objective truth of their respective, authoritative sources that they seek to reflect.
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> We can see therefore that theology and science are both on the same methodological plane. They are epistemologically on an equal footing—that is, we should have equal respect for theological and scientific models that can explain their respective sets of data with equal adequacy according to the common rational criteria.[226]

In conclusion, then, to this comparative discussion of scientific and religious models, we believe we have built a strong case for the legitimacy of the use of models as a cognitive tool in theology, as long as they are seen in a realist perspective. Soskice summarises this conclusion well when she comments that 'any account which treats the theist's models as fully cognitive must be realist in orientation; the Christian empiricist should have no place for models at all, and the idealist, while he may retain them, cannot consistently say that they in any way depict transcendent states and relations'.[227] LaCugna is even more resolute in her position. She considers that 'we have no choice but to use models in theology; since God cannot be "pointed to" as if God were another empirical reality, and since God is known always and only *in relatione*, the fundamental and common structure of all theological models is in relationship between God and the

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[226] D. W. Diehi, 'Evangelicalism and General Revelation: An Unfinished Agenda', *JETS*, 30, 4, 1987, 452.

[227] Soskice, *Metaphor*, 148. A similar conviction is expressed by Oakley, when he warns against the danger of the 'dichotomy of setting up image against logic' and argues that the solution is 'to settle somewhere as critical and figurative realists afraid of reason and unashamed to adore – and believe that divine revelation is too vital to be given and received propositionally' – M. Oakley, 'Review of P. Avis, *God and the Creative Imagination. Metaphor, Symbol and Myth in Religion and Theology* (London: Routledge, 1999)', *Theology*, 108, 813, 2000, 221.

world'.[228] This statement is very close to the characteristic apophaticism and the emphasis on relationality of Eastern Orthodox theology which we will discuss in the second section of our work.

Based on this conclusion, we will next attempt to unfold the value of the use of models for the study of ecclesiology.

2.3 Models of the Church

Ecclesiology undoubtedly occupied a central place in the theological debates of the twentieth century. Nevertheless, it would be very difficult to find an area where there is more disagreement among theologians. Explanations for this degree of diversity vary greatly, from hermeneutical stances,[229] through differences of perspective, to variations in personal experience.[230] According to Dulles, however, the crux of the matter is in essence a disagreement over the nature of the Church. This is, perhaps, not at all surprising, when we remember that one of the fundamental biblical categories for describing the Church is that of 'mystery'.[231] In Orthodox theology in particular, because mystery 'defies all rationalist descriptions and definitions', argues Stamoulis, 'any approach to the mystery of the Church is made by means of icons (εἰκονές), examples (παραδείγματα) and symbols (σύμβολα)', one of the most significant examples of this approach being that of the Church as an icon of the Trinity.[232] If we add to this the overwhelming variety of pictures used by the New Testament in order to describe the Church, we can understand even more clearly the great difficulty of the task ahead of us.

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[228] LaCugna, 'Re-conceiving the Trinity', 13.

[229] Clowney, for instance ('Models', 105), believes that 'the denominational divisions of the church do exist in part because of hermeneutical failure'.

[230] A. Dulles, *Models of the Church* (New York: Doubleday, 1987[2]) 15. This is still the standard work in the area of church models, as indicated by the extensive use of Dulles's approach in a quite recent article, J. A. Kroeger, 'Revisiting Models of Theology. An Exploration into Theological Method', *Asia Journal of Theology*, 15, 2, 2001, 364–374.

[231] Dulles (*Models*, 18) points out that the mysterious nature of the church has important methodological implications. 'It rules out the possibility of proceeding from clear and univocal concepts, or from definitions in the usual sense of the word. The concepts abstracted from the realities we observe in the objective world about us are not applicable, at least directly, to the mystery of man's communion with God'.

[232] C. Stamoulis, '*Physis* and *Agape*: The Application of the Trinitarian Model to the Dialogue on Ecclesiology of the Christian Churches of the Ecumene', *GOTR*, 44, 1–4, 1999, 451.

Paul Minear has catalogued and analysed over eighty figures of the Church.[233] They are drawn from the most varied areas of life: marriage, family, society, religion, agriculture, construction, anatomy, etc. The metaphors blend and intersect, delighting the imagination of the preacher, but certainly puzzling the theologian in search of a coherent picture of the whole.

The way biblical images of the Church work together is characterised by a fair degree of flexibility, so that figures from relatively unrelated areas collapse into each other, as in the case of the body and temple metaphors in 1 Corinthians 6:19. Alongside this conflation of metaphors we also witness in some cases a certain degree of ambiguity as to the degree to which the images are intended to be taken literally or metaphorically. This happens for instance in the image of the Christians seen as being members of the body of Christ (1 Cor. 12) as well as in those of the Church seen as the family or as the people of God.

Before discussing their possible theological use, we need to understand how these figures of the Church function in the sacred text and how we are to interpret them. However, we have to avoid taking them simply as 'word-metaphors', following the outdated substitutionary theory described earlier. Rather, we should use the principle of analogy, which may yield better results simply because 'God has established a universe with analogical structure'.[234] We refer in this context to an 'analogy of proportion'.[235]

A significant application of this principle can be found in the theological nature of these figures. By this is meant that they continuously relate the Church to the trinitarian God – a very important observation for what we are attempting to do in the present work. Thus, if the Church is actually an 'icon of the Trinity', as we will argue

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[233] Minear, *Images*. To be precise, Minear counts ninety-six figures, but some of these, as Dulles rightly points out, may not really be images of the church. We need to add to this two other remarkable studies that take a conceptual approach, rather than Minear's metaphorical one. In his article entitled 'Rethinking Church Models through Scripture' (*Theology Today*, 48, 2, July 1991, 128–138), Walter Brueggemann gives valuable insights to contemporary ecclesiologists by describing three Old Testament community models: (1) the *pre-monarchic*, called also the 'new church start'; (2) the *monarchic*, or the 'temple community'; and (3) the *post-exilic*, or the 'textual community'. Similarly, in his paper 'Models of Christian Community in the New Testament' in D. Martin and P Mullen, eds., *Strange Gifts. A Guide to Charismatic Renewal* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1984), 1–18, James Dunn challenges our ecclesiological thinking with his sometimes debatable but always astute analysis of church models in the New Testament.

[234] Clowney, 'Models', 76.

[235] For a discussion on analogy in the context of theological models, see J. McIntyre, *The Shape of Soteriology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1992) 69–72.

later, it would be only natural to expect the doctrine of the Church to be developed from a trinitarian perspective, the consistency of which, we suggest, should be examined using the perichoretic model that we will be formulating.

We now need to move on to the relationship between the biblical figures of the Church and their possible use as ecclesiological models. The history of theology shows that down the centuries theologians have favoured one or another of the main biblical figures of the Church, according to the degree to which they appeared to fit their theological programme. The two main figures that have always competed for the role of controlling metaphor are 'the body of Christ' and 'the people of God'. In order to complete the trinitarian picture, we should add to these, suggests Behr, the metaphor of the Church as 'temple of the Holy Spirit'.[236]

The most striking example in this area is a relatively recent one. Vatican II, in its 'Dogmatic Constitution of the Church', generally known as *Lumen Gentium*, appears to have initiated an ecclesiological shift away from the central role played traditionally by the metaphor of 'the body of Christ'. The theologians of the council attempted to counteract the possibly negative consequences of this unilateral focus, balancing it with insights provided by the figure of 'the people of God', which has traditionally dominated Reformed ecclesiology. Whether or not they were successful in this endeavour is still open to debate.[237]

A more important issue, however, appears to be the extent to which it is profitable to use biblical metaphors of the Church as ecclesiological models. If we look in the Scriptures, we can readily observe that the divinely inspired authors do not appear to favour one figure at the expense of the others.[238] Thus, Brueggemann contends:

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[236] J. Behr, 'The Trinitarian Being of the Church', *SVTQ*, 48, 1, 2004, 70. The author is indebted for this suggestion to B. D. Marshall, 'The Holy Spirit and the Mystery of the Church: Toward a Lutheran/Orthodox Common Statement', paper presented at the North American Lutheran-Orthodox Dialogue, May, 2002.

[237] A lengthy analysis of this and other related matters can be found in the book by Herwi Rikhof mentioned above.

[238] Minear (*Images*, 222) agrees with this conclusion when he says that 'no one figure can be selected as the dominating base line'. Clowney ('Models', 95) in his turn adds: 'No single metaphor used in Scripture provides an adequate model to incorporate the cognitive elements of all the other metaphors. The two best candidates, 'people of God' and 'body of Christ', demonstrate this by their very juxtaposition, for neither is adequate to express the full content of the other'.

> There is no one single or normative model of church life. It is dangerous and distorting for the church to opt for an absolutist model that it insists upon in every circumstance. Moreover, we are more prone to engage in such reductionism if we do not keep alive a conversation concerning competing and conflicting models. Or, to put it positively, models of the church must not be dictated by cultural reality, but they must be voiced and practiced in ways that take careful account of the particular time and circumstance into which God's people are called. Every model of the church must be critically contextual.[239]

This appears to be true, in spite of the fact that we may justifiably argue that some metaphors, such as the ones already mentioned, have a more comprehensive range of meanings than others. Rather, the biblical record works with a 'vast pluralism of metaphors',[240] the whole picture being the result of putting together the various pieces of this puzzle, beginning, of course, with the weightier ones.

Clowney is correct when he concludes, after analysing a number of biblical images suggested as comprehensive models for ecclesiology, that:

> …the effort to construct one model as an archetype from a Scriptural metaphor has not succeeded. It is conceivable that a particular metaphor could so be used, but we begin to see the dangers that would threaten the project.
>
> The formation of the archetypal model requires a distinct process of construction. The metaphors of Scripture are employed occasionally, not systematically or comprehensively. The metaphor that would be extended to use as a model must be such that other scriptural metaphors and non-metaphorical statements can be included in it. It must also be such that it suggests new ways of understanding the riches of scriptural teaching about the Church.[241]

Does all this mean, however, that in ecclesiology we have to work with a multitude of models? Dulles suggests this solution when he says that if we attempt to be balanced in our approach, 'we have to keep several models in the air at the same time'.[242] Obviously, our agreement on this matter depends on the definition of model

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[239] Brueggemann, 'Church Models', 129.

[240] Clowney, 'Models', 79.

[241] Clowney, 'Models', 82.

[242] Dulles, *Models*, 10. To be fair, we have to concede that the author tries to make a distinction between a mere 'model' and a 'dominant model' or a 'paradigm', understood in Kuhnian terms. However, his case

being used. Kuhn's theory of models appears not to favour such a position. For him, the model, or paradigm, is a super-theory that controls the whole area under scrutiny. If we agree with this, it follows that in order to get the best results we have to use only one 'exclusive' model for ecclesiology at any given time. Goldingay agrees with this position when he says:

> The different models of the Church cannot be related to each other as models. It is as difficult to find the relationships between the Church as mystical communion and the Church as servant as it is to combine the elements of a painting of a cornfield by Van Gogh with elements of one by Constable. Each is offering an account of the whole from a particular perspective.[243]

Nevertheless, this does not mean that any given model can be absolute or that it excludes other possible approaches. Neither does it mean that one particular model is as good as any other. Such relativism would only engender confusion and meaninglessness. As in the case of good or bad metaphors, we need criteria[244] which allow us to judge the extent to which the 'redescription' of the Church provided by a certain model 'fits' first and foremost the biblical data, and secondly the experience/tradition of the Christian community through the centuries.

From a classic Protestant perspective the first criterion appears to be quite unproblematic, with only one possible exception. We need to ask ourselves what happens when, for one reason or another, a particular biblical metaphor becomes problematic in the contemporary context. Some may be tempted to suggest that if it no longer works, we should simply find a new one. The issue, however, is not as simple as it appears to be. As Boersma points out in a recent article on the relevance of penal

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appears to us rather unconvincing. The fact that in the second edition of the book the author proposes, besides the five models debated in the first edition, his own comprehensive model, 'the church as a community of disciples' may perhaps be taken to substantiate our case.

[243] Goldingay, *Models of Scripture*, 11.

[244] Discussing theological models in general, Glenn ('Criteria', 298) suggests two categories: (1) 'criteria of preference' – which help the theologian choose between models, and (2) 'criteria of reference' – that help assess the extent to which the model fits the biblical data. Glenn ('Criteria', 299–300), following J. McIntyre, *The Shape of Christology. Studies in the Doctrine of the Death of Christ* (London: SCM, 1966), chapter 3, suggests four criteria of preference, in terms of: (1) *scope* – ability to correlate a high proportion of the relevant biblical material; (2) *clarity* – ability to 'communicate the clearest and deepest understanding of the truth in question'; (3) *relevance* – ability to 'make the truth of the Bible most relevant'; (4) *pragmatism* – ability to 'renew and sustain faith in Jesus Christ with moral results'. In fact, what we shall endeavour to do in what follows is to offer a way of pairing these criteria in two groups and add a new one, related to community validation.

substitution, 'while metaphors are culturally formed and embedded, we cannot simply exchange them for others without also affecting the content of what we are saying. We need to ask what is lost in the shift from one metaphor or model to another'.[245]

The second criterion consists in the validation of our metaphors within the Christian community. One may ask why it is necessary to check our models over against the experience of the *communio* of the faithful. We have to do it firstly because this is the primary source of the biblical images themselves and secondly because if a certain metaphor does not catch the imagination of the Christian community it cannot work effectively in renewing its vision. This may not be as easy to accomplish today, as it used to be in the past. We agree with Dulles that 'in times of rapid cultural change, such as our own, a crisis of images is to be expected. Many traditional images lose their former hold on people, while the new images have not yet had time to gain their full power. The contemporary crisis of faith is, I believe, in very large part a crisis of images'.[246] As Minear argues, we may need to witness the restoration of the power of imagination within the Church of Christ.[247] Without this dynamic, there is little hope that we will experience any real church renewal.

To these considerations we may need to add a kind of pragmatic corollary, which has to do with the practical consequences of applying a certain model or theory within an ecclesial community. If these consequences are negative, we may need to re-check the theoretical reconstruction that informs our practice. Dulles is right when he argues that 'a model that leads to practical abuses is, even from a theoretical standpoint, a bad model'.[248]

In the light of what has been said already, it is also reasonable to contend that much confusion can be avoided if the ecclesiological model for which we are looking is constructed from outside of the limited data of biblical revelation. This is precisely our approach in the present thesis, by suggesting a perichoretic model of the Church. We

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[245] H. Boersma, 'The Disappearance of Punishment. Metaphors, Models and the Meaning of the Atonement', *Books & Culture*, March/April 2003 (http://www.christianitytoday.com/bc/2003/002/16.32.html, accessed on March 19, 2003).

[246] Dulles, *Models*, 21. Further on (p. 26), and closely related to the above, the author adds that 'theological verification [of such models] depends upon a kind of corporate discernment of spirits'.

[247] Minear, *Images*, 17.

[248] Dulles, *Models*, 28.

believe this could be a valuable instrument for investigating ecclesiological systems in general, but particularly those developed on a trinitarian basis. Moreover, it might prove to be a very useful basis for renewing our ecclesiological thinking.

At the same time, such an approach does not have to exclude recourse to biblical metaphors of the Church: quite the contrary. In fact, as Clowney rightly argues, 'we can never discard the metaphors of Scripture. The metaphorical form is not chaff to be blown away once the wheat of meaning has been harvested. No, the metaphors remain, not only to compel us to re-check our conclusions, but also to lead us into further understanding produced by the power of their truth'.[249] However, as he points out, they have to be 'understood in their context by careful exegesis', which has to be 'sensitive to both their independent structure and their interrelation'. Likewise, we have to be careful not to 'interpret scriptural metaphors by imaginatively applying [to them] our own associations',[250] which may be very different from those normally made by the implied readers of the text. Furthermore, 'we must also take account of the horizon of the history of redemption in which the discourse is found'.[251]

It is within the above parameters that we plan to pursue our discussion on 'a perichoretic model of the Church', constructed as an instrument for exploring the trinitarian ecclesiology of Dumitru Staniloae.

2.4 Conclusions

Our discussion of the nature of metaphor and the legitimacy of the use of models in theology can be summarised in the following statements:

'Metaphor' is a complex concept, which does not lend itself easily either to definition, or to description. This explains the extreme diversity of positions expressed in this area in recent decades.

The idea that all language (or even theological language) is entirely metaphorical is self-defeating. Were that so, metaphor could contribute nothing to illuminating our noetic horizon.

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[249] Clowney, 'Models', 97.

[250] Clowney, 'Models', 84–85.

[251] A very good example is the way the Old Testament metaphors related to the people of God are transformed in the light of the new covenant (Clowney, 'Models', 87–89).

Metaphor has been legitimately advocated as useful in both science and theology. For this to be so, however, its role should not be reduced to that of a rhetorical device.

Metaphor has an undeniable aesthetic or emotive function. However, reducing it to this alone would be to make its scientific and theological use almost superfluous. The same is true for the substitutionary view of metaphor, which reduces metaphorical interpretation to the search for the best possible paraphrase (literalism). This risk is rooted in the fact that grammar alone cannot account for the deviation that metaphor represents.

The most important function for our discussion here is the heuristic role of metaphor – its capacity to mediate access to new knowledge. This implies that some metaphors can offer better access to understanding a certain domain, which requires us to distinguish between good and bad metaphors according to certain criteria.

A secondary but not unimportant function of metaphor is that of expressing the linguistic creativity that should be manifested by any theological or religious endeavour. Such a feature should not be neglected in a time when a dry and unimaginative scholasticism appears to dominate theological writing.

Metaphor is essentially a linguistic concept. Nevertheless, it lays the foundation for the formulation of a heuristic concept of model – a theoretical construct attempting to offer a new perspective on a previously known domain. In particular, the contemporary interest in the use of models in science and theology has been stimulated to a large extent by the developments brought about by Kuhn's paradigm-change theory.

The distinction that some authors try to make between scientific and theological models in terms of their referentiality and dispensability is unwarranted and rooted in unacceptable empiricist or idealist positions. In spite of the differences between the domains under scrutiny, both theological models and scientific ones function in a similar fashion as creative redescriptions of the areas to which they refer.

From the various types of models described by theorists, we are interested here in the formulation of a theoretical model, which we call 'a perichoretic model of the

Church'. We maintain that it could offer theology a new understanding of the concept of Church.

We find in the Scriptures an overwhelming variety of images describing the mysterious nature of the church. It appears, nevertheless, that the efforts of isolating one or two of them in order to construct an ecclesiological model have been unsuccessful.

This is precisely why we have chosen to use a concept from outside the range of the biblical images of the church, in order to formulate our ecclesiological model, that we call 'a perichoretic model of the church'. However, before formulating this model in precise terms, we need to make another preparatory step. It aims to clarify the meaning and the theological implications of the concept of *perichoresis* in its historical perspective.

3 An Evaluation of The Meanings of *Perichoresis*

In the previous chapter, we have established the legitimacy of using theoretical models as heuristic devices in theology. Before proceeding to construct a perichoretic model of the Church, we need to perform a historical excursus. Its purpose is to help us understand the way in which the concept of *perichoresis* came to be used in theology, together with the various meanings it took upon itself and their implications for ecclesiology.

3.1 The Basic Meaning of Perichoresis

Perichoresis derives from the Greek noun *chora* (χώρα), meaning 'space' or 'room'and from the verb *chorein* (χώρειν), which can be translated as 'to contain', 'to make room' or 'to go forward', with the added idea of reciprocity introduced by the particle '*peri*'. Lampe translates *perichoreo* as 'encompass', 'alternate by revolution', 'pass into reciprocally'.[252] 'It indicates a sort of mutual containing or enveloping of realities, which we also speak of as *coinherence* or *coindwelling*'.[253] It is 'the dynamic process of making room for another around oneself'.[254] All these terms were used in classical Greek thought in order to convey the notion of the permeation of matter by God.[255]

We can also distinguish between a static sense of *perichoresis*, which could better be translated as 'coinherence' or 'mutual indwelling' (Lat. *circuminsessio*[256], from *circum-in-sedere*, meaning 'to sit around') and a dynamic sense of the word, that

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[252] G. W. H. Lampe (ed.), *A Patristic Greek Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1961) 1077.

[253] T. F. Torrance, *The Christian Doctrine of God, One Being Three Persons* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996) 102.

[254] M. G. Lawler, '*Perichoresis*: New Theological Wine in An Old Theological Wineskin', *Horizons*, 22, Spring 1995, 49

[255] T. A. Dearborn, 'God, Grace and Salvation', in T. A. Hart and D. P. Thimell (eds.), *Christ in Our Place. The Humanity of God in Christ for the Reconciliation of the World* (Exeter: Paternoster and Allison Park, Penn.: Pickwick, 1989), 286.

[256] According to V, Loichita, 'Perihoreza si enipostasia in dogmatica', *Ortodoxia*, 10, 1, Jan–Mar 1958, 6, the first to use this term when translating *perichoresis* into Latin was Henry of Genf in the thirteenth century. Dearborn, 'God', 288, argues that this is a rather approximate translation of the Greek term. Indeed, this rendering implies only the passive dimension of the original. It was the preferred rendering of *perichoresis* for Thomas Aquinas.

would be better rendered as 'interpenetration'[257] (Lat. *circumincessio*[258], from *circum-incedere*, meaning 'to move around') or as 'moving in and through the other', a sense preferred by Bonaventure[259] and other western theologians.[260]

Disandro observes that the verb *perichorein* and the noun *perichoresis* 'do not belong to the stock of the epic language, or to the lyric-elegiac corpus, or to the language of the tragic authors'. Neither are they present in the writings of Plato and Aristotle. However, the verb can be found in: Herodotus, *Histories, I.210*, with the meaning of 'dynastic succession' (not encountered in later texts) and in Aristophanes, *Birds, 958*, in a parody of a sacrificial rite. Outside the patristic context, the noun can be found in the Stoic author Anaxagoras, with the sense of irreversible permanent dynamic communication between the *Nous* and the cosmos.[261]

One implication of the active sense suggested by *circumincessio* is the beautiful metaphor of the 'divine dance', first used in the Middle Ages as an image of divine *perichoresis*.[262] The metaphor is in fact based on confusion or, at best, on a play on words. Thus the verb *chorein* (χώρειν), meaning 'to contain', is confused with the Greek word *choreuo* (χώρευο), meaning 'to dance', from which is derived *perichoreuo* (περιχωρέυο), meaning 'to dance around'. Thus Hamilton talks about '*perichoresis*, with its etymological connection with dance'.[263] Nevertheless, in spite of the fact that

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[257] According to S. H. Ford, '*Perichoresis* and Interpenetration: Samuel Taylor Coleridge's Trinitarian Conception of Unity', *Theology*, 89, Jan. 1986, 21, the term 'interpenetration' as translation of *perichoresis* was coined by Coleridge. Before him, other more cumbersome terms were used, such as 'in-existence', 'mutual-in-being', 'mutual in-existence in each other', 'mutual consciousness', 'mutual self-*consciousness''*, etc.

[258] Used first by Burgundio of Pisa, in the twelfth century, according to Loichita, 6.

[259] Bonaventura, *Liber Sententiarum, I, Dist. 19, I.I.4*, as quoted in P. S. Fiddes, *Participating in God. A Pastoral Doctrine of the Trinity* (London: DLT, 2000) 72.

[260] See A. Deneffe, '*Perichoresis*, *circumincession*, *circuminsessio*. Eine Terminologische Untersuchung', *Zeitschrift fur Katolische Theologie*, 47, 1923, 497–532. The author carries out a serious analysis of the various terms used in theology to convey the patristic notion of *perichoresis*.

[261] C. A. Disandro, 'Historia semantica de perikhoresis', *Studia Patristica*, 15, 1, 1984, 442–447. In this article, the author studies the history of this term from Homer to pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite.

[262] Fiddes, *Participating in God*, 72.

[263] R Hamilton, 'Individuation and Co-inherence: A Manifesto', *Theology*, 89, 727, 1986, 18. The same error was made by J. K. Hogan, 'Two Concepts from Eastern Spirituality: *Perichoresis* and Epiclesis', *Diakonia*, 20, 2, 1986, 86, R. Kress, 'The Church Communio: Trinity and Incarnation as the Foundations of Ecclesiology', *The Jurist*, 36, 1976, 140 and W. J. Hill, *The Three-Personed God. The Trinity as a Mystery of Salvation* (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1982) 272 – see Lawler, '*Perichoresis*', 53, n. 21. To be fair, we need to add, with Lawler, that Kress retracted this error in a later work – R. Kress, *The Church: Communion, Sacrament, Communion* (New York: Paulist, 1985) 272.

the metaphor of the 'divine dance' is based on a faulty etymology, we agree with Fiddes that 'the play on words illustrates well the dynamic sense of *perichoresis*'.[264] LaCugna herself argues that 'even if the philological warrant is scant, the metaphor of dance is effective', more so than other rather static and impersonal analogies, like that of the light of lamps,[265] of perfume sprayed in the air, or of the three dimensions of physical objects.[266]

The term *perichoresis* itself does not appear in Scripture. It is rather, as Gunton suggests, 'a human rational construct which has been developed under the constraints of revelation and inspiration, a process of thinking theologically under the impact of the economy of creation and redemption'.[267]

Because of the complex and sometimes ambiguous history of the concepts involved, the translation of *perichoresis* and the cognates is not an easy one, as has been shown by Thunberg in an overview of the (mostly unsatisfactory) manner in which various patristic dictionaries deal with these terms.[268] This is why it is impossible to avoid a historical excursus if we are to give any substance to the concept of 'perichoretic model'.

3.2 Christological Perichoresis

Lossky asserts that Origen was the first to formulate the doctrine which was later to be called 'perichoretic', or the doctrine of the 'communication of idioms'.[269] Congar adds

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[264] Fiddes, *Participating in God,* 72. A similar approach is taken by Grenz, who applies the metaphor to the church and argues that 'participation in the perichoretic dance of the triune God as those who by the Spirit are in Christ is what constitutes community in the highest sense and hence marks the true church' – S. Grenz, 'Ecclesiology' in K. J. Vanhoozer (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to Postmodern Theology* (Cambridge: CUP, 2003) 268.

[265] Pseudo-Dyonisius, *De Div. Nom.*, II, 4.

[266] C. M. LaCugna, *God for Us. The Trinity and Christian Life* (New York: HarperCollins, 1991), 271.

[267] C. E. Gunton, *The One, the Three and the Man. God, Creation and the Culture of Modernity. The Bampton Lectures 1992* (Cambridge: CUP, 1993), 164.

[268] L. Thunberg, '"Circumincession" once more: Trinitarian and Christological Implications in an Age of Religious Pluralism', *Studia Patristica*, 29, 1979, 366–368.

[269] V. Lossky, *The Vision of God* (Crestwood, NY: SVSP, 1983, 59. Other authors, like Thunberg ('Circumincession', 366), do not equate the two concepts, but make the communication of attributes dependent on the interpenetration of the two natures in Christ.

that 'although the words *perichoresis* and circumincession may not occur as such in the writings of the earliest Fathers of the Church, the idea certainly does'.[270]

It appears that until Pseudo-Cyril, the term under scrutiny was only used in a Christological sense, as an attempt to account for the relation between the two natures in the person of the incarnated Christ. According to Wolfson, it was taken over from the Stoics' vocabulary.[271] In his discussion of *perichoresis* and its cognates Wolfson concludes that

> the term *perichoresis*, with either εἰς or ἐν or δια or προς, is used by the Fathers in the sense of a 'thorough penetration', as a physical analogy for the purpose of explaining the *communicatio idiomatum*… The physical analogy meant by the term *perichoresis* is the same as that of the Stoic 'mixture'… The *perichoresis* or penetration is always used as a mutual act, but the two sides of the mutual act are conceived as being neither simultaneous in occurrence nor the same in meaning… The penetration of the divine nature into the human is taken to mean the deification of the human nature, without completely destroying it; the penetration of the human nature into the divine is taken to mean assumption by the divine nature of a human nature, without suffering any change in its divinity. While both penetrations constitute what is called the hypostatic union, it is the second penetration that constitutes what is called the Incarnation.[272]

Otto agrees with this conclusion, adding that *perichoresis* was linked 'to the Stoic concept of mixture, *krasis di'holon*, which means a complete mutual interpenetration of two substances that preserves the identity and properties of each intact'.[273] We will summarise below the historical trajectory of the Christological meaning of *perichoresis*, as well as its main proponents.

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[270] Y. Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* (New York: Crossroad, 1997) 3:37.

[271] H. A. Wolfson, *The Philosophy of the Church Fathers* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1970[3]) 418–421.

[272] Wolfson, 428. For extensive discussions of the various Stoic meanings of mixture, see two works of S. Sambursky, *The Physical World of the Greeks* (New York: Macmillan, 1956) and *The Physics of the Stoics* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul 1973).

[273] R. E. Otto, 'The Use and Abuse of *Perichoresis* in Recent Theology', *SJT*, 54, 3, 2001, 368. See also in this sense Deneffe, '*Perichoresis*'.

3.2.1 History

(1) *Macarius of Egypt (d. 390).*[274] According to Prestige, the word under scrutiny appears for the first time in its verbal form (Gr. περιχωρέω) in Macarius (*de pat. et discr., 5*) with the meaning of 'encircle' or 'encompass'.[275]

(2) *Gregory of Nazianzus (330–390).* The author uses the word περιχωρέω three times:

a. *Or. 18.42* – 'Life and death, as they are called, apparently so different, are in a sense resolved into, and successive to, each other'. It relates to life and death, which are said to 'reciprocate' and, to use the words of Prestige, 'resolve themselves into one another'.

The word involves a sort of 'interchange produced by the revolution of successive cycles'. Harrison concedes that Gregory sometimes uses *perichoreo* with the sense of 'alternation' (as in *Or 22.4*) but she strongly disagrees with Prestige regarding *Or. 18.42* and suggests that Gregory's point here is precisely to show how life and death are present in each other and thus are 'mixed' or 'interpenetrated', in the Stoic sense.[276]

b. *Or. 22.4* – of the phenomenon of satiety, in which all things coinhere or make room for one another and are converted into one another.[277]

c. *Ep. 101, 87C* – 'the names being mingled like the natures, and flowing into one another, according to the law of their intimate union' – the word is used here of the titles of Christ related to his human nature, which are mingled and 'reciprocate' (flow into one another) with the titles related to his divine nature.[278]

It is true that in this context the verb is not applied directly to the two natures of Christ. Nevertheless, Gregory clearly implies that the two natures 'reciprocate' in the same way as the titles do.[279] Harrison concedes that the verb here means 'pass reciprocally', but adds that 'this interchange of names is grounded ontologically in the mutual

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[274] Dating of Church Fathers following Angelo di Berardino (ed.), *Dictionnaire Encyclopédique du Christianisme Ancien*, 2 vols. (Paris: Cerf, 1990).

[275] L. G. Prestige, *God in Patristic Thought* (London: SPCK, 1959), 291.

[276] V. Harrison, '*Perichoresis* in the Greek Fathers', *SVTQ*, 35, 1, 1991, 56.

[277] Lawler, *Perichoresis*', 50. Alternatively, L. Prestige, 'Περιχωρέω and Περιχωρησις in the Fathers', *JTS*, 29, 1928, 242, translates the same text as meaning that 'all things "reciprocate" into one another and are subject of revolution'.

[278] This appears to be chronologically the first time περιχωρέω is used in a Christological sense.

[279] Prestige, *God*, 291–292.

interpenetration of natures'.[280] In the same manner, as Wolfson correctly observes, the reciprocation (or interpenetration) of attributes is derived from, or caused by, the same relation in the natures, not vice versa. In addition, Wolfson observes that *perichoreo* (which he translates as 'penetration') is 'used synonymously with mixture', in the Stoic sense of the word.[281] Otto, closely following the patristic exegesis of Harrison, concludes that in this context the *communicatio idiomatum* takes place 'by virtue of interpenetration, but not commingling of these natures'.[282] By contrast, Pannenberg describes this as a 'rather careless' use of the term.[283]

Wolfson goes even further, concluding that if 'the penetration of the divine nature into the human nature thus means the deification of the latter by the former', in the same manner 'we may reasonably assume that conversely the penetration of the human nature into the divine means the humanation of the latter by the former. But', adds Wolfson, 'how and in what sense the human nature humanated the divine nature Gregory does not say'.[284] Surprisingly, the author does not seem to be at all aware of the dangerously Monophysite implications of his suggestions.

Neither Harrison nor Otto, still less Wolfson, appears to be concerned at this point about the danger of Monophysitism implicit in the Stoic notion of mixture with which Christological *perichoresis* is associated. They consider the mere affirmation of the non-commingling of natures in the process of interpenetration to be a sufficient safeguard.

Studer, on the other hand, describes Gregory's preoccupation with *perichoresis* simply as 'philosophical speculation', to be contrasted with a more 'truly Christian concern' of the patristic author, namely the fact that 'the deification of Christ's humanity is (for him) the basis for his mysticism of the deification of man'.[285] Bouteneff argues in the same general direction when he suggests that Gregory's chief preoccupation is not so much the relationship between the two φύσεις, but rather the

[280] Harrison, '*Perichoresis*', 55.

[281] Wolfson, 421.

[282] Otto, 'Use and Abuse', 368.

[283] W. Pannenberg, *Jesus – God and Man* (London: SCM, 1968) 297.

[284] Wolfson, 422.

[285] B. Studer, *Trinity and Incarnation. The Faith of the Early Church* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993) 196.

ontological unity of the person of Christ. Thus Gregory explains in *Ep. 101* that Christ is two 'whats', but not two 'whos', while in the Trinity there are three 'whos' and one 'what'.[286]

(3) *Leontius of Byzantium (d. 543)*. A derivative compound word, ἀντιπεριχωρέω, is used in what may be a gloss to a text of Leontius of Byzantium (*C. Nest and Eut. 2*, *PG* 86.1320B). In this context it has the meaning of 'being interchangeable' and it again refers to the two natures of Christ, in the sense that 'one may be predicated, instead of the other, of the one Christ who is in both.[287]

The special contribution of Leontius consists in the clarification of the concept of *enhypostasia*, according to which the human nature of Christ is fully personal (enhypostatic) by being manifested within the hypostasis of the incarnated Christ, without this hypostasis being an expression of a single nature.

Staniloae comments that Leontius takes care to emphasize that 'the natures are not obliterated through the communication of attributes'.[288] In order to substantiate his conclusions, Leontius uses a number of similes taken from the material realm.[289]

(4) *Maximus the Confessor (579–662)*. Christological περιχωρέω (in close connection with *communicatio idiomatum*) is also used by Maximus, who appears to have adopted it from Gregory[290] and transformed it into an 'almost technical Christological term'.[291]

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[286] P. Bouteneff, 'St. Gregory Nazianzen and Two-Nature Christology', *SVTQ*, 38, 3, 1994, 267–268. We find a similar preoccupation, in this case soteriologically motivated, in the Christological writings of Cyril of Alexandria – see L. J. Welch, 'Logos-Sarx? Sarx and the Soul of Christ in the Early Thought of Cyril of Alexandria', *SVTQ*, 38, 4, 1994, 271–292.

[287] Prestige, *God*, 292. The author mentions the use of the same word in the writings of two thirteenth century writers, John Veccus and George Pachimeres, this time in a pneumatological sense, to refer to the 'interchangeability' of the prepositions 'out of' and 'through' used in the 'formula of the double procession of the Holy Ghost'.

[288] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:60.

[289] Prestige (*God*, 299) is critical of the use of these metaphors (which he calls 'false analogies'), although he accepts the fact that the nature of theology itself makes it impossible for mortals 'to comprehend or to discuss God except by using symbols derived from mortal experience'.

[290] Prestige, 'Περιχωρέω', 243.

[291] Thunberg, 'Circumincession', 365. The author adds that the term could acquire its full-fledged function only after the Council of Chalcedon of 451. He seems to imply by this comment that the Christological clarifications occasioned by this council helped protect the term from its Monophysite dangers.

Staniloae explains that in Maximus we find a much clearer formulation of the communication of attributes of the two natures of Christ than in Leontius.[292]

a. (*On Dion. Ep. 4.8*) when quoting the third text of Gregory mentioned above.

Maximus uses the term adverbially in *Ambigua* (*112b D*) where he explains that 'the human nature totally makes room for (*perikechoreke*) the divine nature, to which it is united without any confusion'[293] In the above-mentioned text, explains Prestige, Maximus suggests that 'the human nature is *involved with* the divine nature and *reciprocates* with it'.[294] Gregory's reciprocation of titles becomes here explicitly a reciprocation of natures.

Thunberg goes as far as to say that in fact 'to Maximus *circumincessio* is the presupposition of the *communicatio* [*idiomatum*], rather the other way around'. Although aware of the controversial nature of this statement, he also suggests, against Prestige, that the primacy of the divine nature in the process of hypostatic union 'does not exclude that the human nature comes to its full expression in this interplay'.[295] Staniloae appears to be in agreement with Thunberg's conclusion when he states that, for Maximus, in the incarnated person of Christ,

> the attributes of the two natures are maintained to a certain degree, so that the attributes of the human nature can be identified as being human. This implies a deification of the human nature up to a certain degree even during the earthly existence [of Christ]. Its deification will be complete after the resurrection. Yet, even then we will be able to discern through thinking that which is deified and that which deifies, that is the human nature in its distinction from the divine nature, although in reality they cannot be separated nor even distinguished one from the other. Paradoxically, we have on the one side a continuous progress in deification and on the other hand a remaining [lit. a non coming out] of the human nature in its

[292] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:60.

[293] See Lawler, '*Perichoresis*', 50. According to Prestige, *God*, 292, the author means by this that 'the human nature… by virtue of being inconfusedly united with the divine nature, has entirely περικεχώρηκε, "interchanged", "become reciprocal", with the divine nature, possessing thenceforward absolutely nothing that is detached or separated from the deity which is hypostatically united to it'.

[294] Prestige, 'Περιχωρέω', 243.

[295] Thunberg, 'Circumincession', 368, 371.

definition and specificity. This is so because it always needs to receive, while the divine nature remains a never-ending source of life and light.[296]

Commenting further on the Maximian text, Prestige insists that 'the meaning here cannot be "interpenetrate", because no one ever had the hardihood to suggest that the human nature is capable of interpenetrating the divine; the process, where it is alleged, is always in the opposite direction and that for reasons sufficiently obvious'.[297] The commentator suggests that it would be hard to imagine that Maximus 'failed to understand the sense of the verb in his revered Gregory'.[298] Thus we may conclude that to interpret the above texts as meaning that the human nature in Christ interpenetrates the divine would be unwarranted and would contradict the obvious truth that the divine nature can penetrate human nature, while the opposite cannot be true without major negative implications for the integrity of the human nature of Christ.

Although he concedes that the rendering of *perichoresis* as 'reciprocation' is plausible in some Maximian passages, Stead disagrees with Prestige at this point and suggests that 'there seems in Maximus to be a development toward the meaning [of coinherence or interpenetration] given the term by Pseudo-Cyril'.[299]

Wolfson expresses a very different perspective from Prestige and observes that in fact Maximus simply presupposes the deification of the humanity of Christ as it is penetrated by the divine nature and 'does not hesitate here to speak of the human nature as penetrating "through" the divine nature'. Moreover, he suggests 'there was no hesitancy on the part of Maximus, or on the part of any other Father, to make use of that expression in his attempt to explain the mystery of the Incarnation by the analogy of the same physical kind of union'.[300] Again, Wolfson does not appear to be aware of the limits of the physical analogy, nor of the Monophysite implications of the analogy when transposed into the realm of psychology.

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[296] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:60–61.

[297] Prestige, *God*, 292–293.

[298] Prestige, 'Περιχωρέω', 246.

[299] J. Stead, '*Perichoresis* in the Christological Chapters of the *De Trinitate* of Pseudo-Cyril of Alexandria', *Dominican Studies*, 6, 1953, 17–19.

[300] Wolfson, 425. Lossky accepts this meaning unreservedly for the relation between the natures of Christ in Maximus, but is careful to qualify his statement, by describing it as 'a certain interpenetration' – V. Lossky, *Orthodox Theology. An Introduction* (Crestwood, NY: SVSP, 1989), 99.

b. (*quaest. ad Thalass. 59, 202B*) Maximus appears to be the first patristic author to use the noun περιχώρησις theologically. (The term had been used previously by Anaxagoras in the sense of 'rotation').

The Confessor uses it first in the general sense of 'completion of the cycle' of faith, in which the beginning coincides with the end. Prestige believes this is 'decisive for the meaning of *perichoresis*'.[301] 'Moreover', he states in an earlier article, 'the fact that the preposition εἰς is retained by Maximus from Gregory in connexion with the περιχώρησις of the two natures of Christ suggests that the sense of joined and simultaneous revolution to the opposite points in a given circuit is more appropriate than that of interpenetration by one object of another'.[302]

c. (*Max Conf. cap D 4.19*) The same patristic author uses *perichoresis* in relation to the movement from appearance to reality, through the action of faith. It suggests the idea that 'the object of faith, from having been discerned dimly from the back, has now turned round and revealed his glory'. The word has been translated 'revelation', but Prestige believes that 'revolution' would be a better rendition of the literal meaning of the term in this context.[303]

d. (*schol. In Dion. Div. Nom. 5.8.7*) Maximus also used ἀντιπεριχωρέω, in the sense of 'revolution' or 'alternation' in relation to night and day, or planting seeds and harvesting.[304]

e. We find the Christological meaning of περιχώρησις in various places in Maximus in the sense of 'reciprocity of action', as in the case of spoken word and concept (*disp. Pyrrh. 187A*) or of cutting and burning in the case of a red-hot knife (*opusc. 102B*).

The patristic writer, explains Prestige, uses these analogies

> …not to explain the unity of the one Christ, but the singleness of action and effect which proceeded from the two natures united in his person. And it should be added that he always calls the process a *perichoresis* of the two natures 'to' (εἰς or προς) one another, never a *perichoresis* 'in' (ἐν) one another or 'through' (δια) one

[301] Prestige, *God*, 293.

[302] Prestige, 'Περιχωρέω', 246–247.

[303] Prestige, 'Περιχωρέω', 246.

[304] Prestige, *God*, 293.

another. The idea in the background is simply the metaphor of rotation from a fixed point back to that point again.[305]

All the considerations above make Prestige differ from Wolfson, Stead and Harrison and conclude that in Maximus 'the natural and proper Christological sense of περιχώρησις is *reciprocation'* and that 'the sense of interpenetration is to be rejected for this author'.[306]

(5) *Pseudo-Cyril (7th century).*

Stead suggests that the Christological use of *perichoresis* by Pseudo-Cyril 'grew up with and out of the controversies with Monothelitism'.[307]

a. In a passage (*De Trin. 22*) not appropriated by the Damascene, Pseudo-Cyril uses the term in order to explain that 'the divinity is the anointing element, the humanity the anointed element, the anointing itself the *perichoresis* of the anointer into the anointed'.[308]

By anointing, explains Prestige, he meant 'the *perichoresis* of the entire chrism into the entire anointed… The implication clearly is that in his case the chrism of divinity permeated his humanity. The *perichoresis* has become, in the author's eyes, a process of unification between the two natures in our Lord'.[309]

b. In a different passage (*De. Trin. 24*) Pseudo-Cyril elaborates on the *perichoresis* of the two natures in Christ having as its consequence the deification of the human flesh of Christ.

He does not see this as resulting in a composite nature but as a hypostatic union of the two natures – 'an unconfused and unaltering *perichoresis* into one another', which 'proceeds not from the flesh but from the divinity, since it is impossible for the flesh to *perichorein* through divinity'.[310] The process in this case appears to be one of one-sided penetration.

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[305] Prestige, *God*, 294. See also Prestige, Περιχωρέω', 248.

[306] Prestige, Περιχωρέω', 247.

[307] Stead, '*Perichoresis*', 12.

[308] See Lawler, '*Perichoresis*', 51.

[309] Prestige, *God*, 294.

[310] Prestige, *God*, 294–295.

Nevertheless, Pseudo-Cyril continues his argument by stating that 'the divine nature having once penetrated through the flesh, gave also to the flesh the ineffable penetration toward (πρὸς) itself, which is called union'.[311] This statement cause Harrison to conclude that here the *perichoresis* of the two natures in Christ should be understood in a dynamic sense, meaning that although it is asymmetrical – proceeding from the divine towards the human nature, 'it is not exclusively one sided'.[312] At this point, Harrison is at odds with Prestige. However, she concedes that Pseudo-Cyril takes special care when dealing with *perichoresis*, not just in this Christological context but also in contexts related to the deification of the saints, not to use the particle 'towards' (πρὸς) but rather 'into' (εἰς) or 'in' (ἐν). This leads her to conclude that 'the penetration of the created into the uncreated, however it occurs, cannot be exhaustive permeation'.[313] Lawler agrees with her, concluding that for Pseudo-Cyril 'Christological *perichoresis*… is not fully mutual'.[314]

Wolfson agrees with Harrison when he suggests that we have here a two-step process: the first step is the 'deification of the flesh', and this is prior to and causal for the second, which is the actual 'incarnation of the Word'. From Pseudo-Cyril's phrase 'penetration into one another', Wolfson draws the conclusion that in fact this second step, which Pseudo-Cyril calls 'union' and he calls 'incarnation' and 'humanation', is a movement in the opposite direction, 'the penetration of the already deified human nature into the divine nature'.[315] As we have already observed a number of times Prestige strongly rejects this interpretation of Christological *perichoresis* because of its possible Monophysite implications.

c. Later (*De Trin. 27*) Pseudo-Cyril suggests that 'each nature interchanges with the other what belongs to itself, through the identity of the hypostasis and the *perichoresis* of the natures into one another; so that it is possible to say that "God appeared on earth" and that "this man is uncreated and impassible."'

[311] Harrison, '*Perichoresis*', 60.

[312] Harrison, '*Perichoresis*', 60.

[313] Harrison, '*Perichoresis*', 60. This statement is immediately followed by the following suggestion: 'Ps.-Cyril indicates elsewhere [*De Trin. 22*] that in Christ the human nature is completely permeated by the divine', which is indicative of her ambivalence on the topic and of her inability or unwillingness to tackle the issue of the grave danger of Monophysitism implied in such statements.

[314] Lawler, '*Perichoresis*', 51.

[315] Wolfson, 424

The context here is a discussion on the *communicatio idiomatum*, in the course of which Pseudo-Cyril suggests that the attributes of the two natures interchange. Wolfson takes this to mean 'the penetration of the properties into one another', while he admits that the patristic author is not referring in this context to the interpenetration of natures.[316] Taking a very different line, Prestige believes that the interchange of properties that Pseudo-Cyril discusses here 'in the last resort only amounts to a verbal formality'.[317] The two positions could clearly not be further from each other.

Stead suggests rather that 'Cyril was evidently one who considered it was not enough to say Christ has two natures united according to one hypostasis, but that more is required in order to express the fullness of the relationship of union between the two natures. The result is', believes Stead, 'a tendency towards Monophysitism',[318] in spite of the patristic author's awareness of the risk and his polemical stance against the Monophysites. This leads Stead to the conclusion that Pseudo-Cyril's interpretation of *perichoresis* as the coinherence or the interpenetration of the two natures in Christ 'is to be rejected… as positively tending to Monophysitism', because it suggests an understanding of Christ as a composite person – 'one person *out of* (ἐξ) two natures'.[319]

(6). *John of Damascus (650–750).* Most scholars agree that John is not really an innovator. His special contribution was that he summarised the main definitions of true orthodoxy as they had been developed earlier by other patristic authors. Although his emphasis was clearly on trinitarian *perichoresis*, we can also find in his works a number of instances where John discusses the Christological meaning of the term.

The Damascene took over from Maximus the verb *perichoreo* and the noun *perichoresis* as applied to the two natures in Christ (*fid. orth. 3.19, 243A*). John also speaks of Christological *perichoresis* in a variety of other contexts (*c. Jacob. 52 409A; fid. orth. 3.3; 3.5; 3.7; 3.8; 4.18*; etc.).

Following Gregory, John of Damascus emphasises that the interpenetration of the two natures in Christ proceeds 'from' the divine nature 'through' the human nature

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316 Wolfson, 423.

317 Prestige, *God*, 295.

318 Stead, '*Perichoresis*', 12.

319 Stead, '*Perichoresis*', 16–17. The author explains further (p. 10) that 'it is not easy to avoid a "confusing" meaning in the terms "interpenetration" and "coinherence"'.

and never in the reverse direction, because the divine nature 'penetrates through all things as it wills, while nothing penetrates through it' (*3.7*).[320] We may say that for John, in these contexts, Christological *perichoresis* is one-sided and asymmetrical. Thus as Twombly points out, the two natures are not perceived as 'equally active in the union. If they were, then perhaps some form of Nestorianism would be the reasonable outcome. On the other hand, if one of the natures were so dominant as to reduce the other to quiescence, then the result would not be asymmetry but the virtual reduction of the incarnate Logos to one nature'.[321]

However, in other contexts John appears to suggest a certain degree of reciprocity in the interpenetration of the two natures of Christ. Certainly, the human nature could not initiate the process, but after its initiation, it is suggested that the penetration is mutual.[322]

At the same time, he takes special care to state that the characteristics of humanity are not impaired but remain unaltered in the process of interpenetration. This is of vital importance soteriologically because 'what has not been assumed cannot be healed'[323] and also because 'a full and real humanity had to be embraced in order for it to be "deified" by its union with the divine nature'.[324] John illustrates this truth with the metaphor of a hot-red sword, where both the sword and the fire remain unaltered, although united indistinguishably in the red-hot iron. The analogy works well on the physical level, but 'it fails', believes Prestige, 'to help to a solution of the psychological problem' involved in the union of the two natures in Christ. Thus 'if divine energies are to be allowed as proceeding from the heavenly sphere of the consciousness of the Logos, through the humanity, there will be grave danger of Apollinarianism: that is, it will not be easy to reconcile such 'control' with the survival of Christ's human

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[320] Wolfson recognizes that 'this passage would seem to say that the penetration is only in one direction', but believes he is warranted, in the light of his own interpretation of Pseudo-Cyril and of other texts in John, interpreting it as meaning that the penetration 'only begins from the divine nature' (p. 427). We need to underline at this point that Wolfson's case rests heavily on the correctness of his derivation of the meaning of *perichoresis* from the Stoic concept of 'mixture'.

[321] C. C. Twombly, *Perichoresis and Personhood in the Thought of John of Damascus* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, Emory University, 1992) 95.

[322] See Thunberg, 'Circumincession', 368.

[323] Gregory of Nazianzus, *Ep. 101* (*MPG* 37.181c).

[324] Twombly, *Perichoresis*, 114.

consciousness, particularly in the sphere of volition'.[325] Pannenberg also adds that 'the weakness of such figurative expressions is that they were open to completely opposing interpretations'.[326] This does not mean that a heightening of the human powers through deification (or penetration by the divine energies) cannot be reconciled with the preservation of a genuine human consciousness, but, believes Prestige, 'this is not the place to undertake it' and the Damascene does not appear to be aware of this psychological problem. Nevertheless, he is still able to protect himself in the process from the danger of Monophysitism.[327] At the same time, as Pannenberg points out, while the Damascene 'spoke of a *perichoresis* of the natures whose movement runs from the divine to the human nature' the Antiochene theologians 'allowed validity only to a communication of the attributes from both natures to the person common to them, but not to an exchange of attributes between the natures themselves'.[328]

From the discussion above, it is obvious that, according to Prestige, as far as the Damascene is concerned,

> …the term implies interpenetration; that this process is identical with, not the result of, the union; that it is similar in kind, if not in degree, to the immanence of God in all things; that although an effect of it is to heighten the powers of the human nature, yet the two natures are to be regarded as remaining distinct; and that consequently *the term is merely an unnecessary technicality which adds no fresh idea to Christological thought, but is extremely liable to be misleading*.[329]

Prestige also points out that John tends to assimilate the two meanings of *perichoresis* to each other. The surprise comes from the fact that the patristic author tries to establish the supposed truth of the *perichoresis* of the two natures of Christ by starting from the *perichoresis* of the three divine *hypostaseis* (*de nat. comp. 4*).

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[325] Prestige, 'Περιχωρέω', 250.

[326] The author shows that the image was used by the heretic Apollinarius, as well as by the orthodox author Theodoret of Cyrrhus – Pannenberg, *Jesus*, 297.

[327] Prestige, 'Περιχωρέω', 250–251.

[328] Pannenberg, *Jesus*, 298. The author argues further (p. 299) that Calvin and Melanchthon share with the Antiochenes the same understanding of the real transfer of attributes from the two natures of Christ to his person. It appears that Staniloae holds a similar position when he argues that because of the communication of attributes 'the hypostasis would be manifested now as purely divine and then as purely human'. Then he adds: 'this communication of attributes is realised through the unity of the person…The two natures could not communicate their powers and actions among themselves, for this would lead to pantheism' – *TDO*, 2:57.

[329] Prestige, 'Περιχωρέω', 245 (italics ours).

However, according to Prestige, in spite of the fact that John may be criticised for resting Christological *perichoresis* on physical metaphors, 'the assimilation is only partial, directed against the Monophysite position'.[330]

Dearborn is more positive in his assessment of the Damascene and of Christological *perichoresis* in general. He defines *perichoresis* in general terms as just 'another way of expressing "the four adverbs of Chalcedon"'. He conceives the *perichoresis* of the two natures in Christ as one-sided 'for the initiative is God's. God penetrates humanity taking it into himself. Humanity does not penetrate God'.[331] Azkoul suggests a similar conclusion when he states that Christological *perichoresis* 'stands at the heart of the Council's definition'.[332]

Harrison, on the other hand, suggests that 'although the Christological *perichoresis* is not wholly symmetrical, it cannot be exclusively one-sided'.[333] She recognises that for John 'the trinitarian *perichoresis* has ontological and conceptual priority', but nevertheless says that 'he understands the Christological *perichoresis* as following the same pattern' as its trinitarian counterpart. Thus believes Harrison, this leads John 'to envisage a symmetry in the *perichoresis* between divine and human in Christ, but in other contexts he also emphasizes their asymmetry'. Being aware of the possible contradiction in the above statement, she tries to solve it somewhat 'apophatically', by saying that 'because the incarnation unites eternal and temporal, infinite and finite, it necessarily involves paradox and perhaps also theological tension… Here we have perhaps reached a point where Byzantine theology resists complete systematization'.[334] Although it is hard to deny the complexity of the issue under scrutiny, the commentator's suggestion appears to be an easy way out, rather than a genuine solution.

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[330] Prestige, *God*, 299.

[331] Dearborn, 'God', 286–287.

[332] M. Azkoul, '*Perichoresis*: The Christology of the Icon', *The Patristic and Byzantine Review*, 7, 1, 1988, 68.

[333] Harrison, '*Perichoresis*', 63.

[334] Harrison, '*Perichoresis*', 61–62.

3.2.2 Evaluation

Stead gives a clear summary of the evolution of the Christological meaning of *perichoresis* and its cognates in the following table:[335]

Gregory of Nazianzus	(1) to interchange, reciprocate, rotate (verb only)
Macarius of Egypt	(1) to encircle or encompass (verb only)
Maximus the Confessor	(1) rotation, interchange, reciprocation, reciprocity of action
	(2) cohering, being bound together (a result of union); compassing; but *not* coinherence or interpenetration
Pseudo-Cyril and John of Damascus	(1) coinherence, interpenetration (synonymous with union, in some passages perhaps its effective cause)

Unlike its trinitarian counterpart, Christological *perichoresis* has not elicited a large degree of agreement among theologians. Reactions range from almost unqualified enthusiastic acceptance (Wolfson, Harrison) through a favourable reception with the necessary qualifications of the Chalcedonian adverbs (Dearborn, Twombly[336]) to a very reserved if not negative position (Prestige, Stead, Gunton).

According to Prestige, the Damascene 'entirely missed' the meaning of *perichoreo* and *perichoresis*,

> …being misled by the uncompounded verb χωρέω (= hold, contain) into thinking that they indicated a sort of penetration or permeation. Applied to the two natures this idea made of the περιχώρησις the actual process of their union, whereas in Gregory and Maximus it had been the result of their union. Consequently, in John's Christology it is difficult to avoid practical Monophysitism unless the περιχώρησις or co-inherence of the humanity and the deity is reduced to a purely formal relationship. In other terms, a term so meaningless, or alternatively so misleading, as this is in the sense which John of Damascus attached to it, had far better have been avoided altogether.[337]

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[335] Stead, '*Perichoresis*', 19.

[336] Twombly devotes chapter 4 of his Ph.D. thesis (153–180), to proving that the Chalcedonian adverbs are sufficient protection from the danger of humanity being obliterated by divinity in the person of the incarnate Logos.

[337] Prestige, 'Περιχωρέω', 243–244.

Also, reflecting on the last occurrence of *perichoresis* in Pseudo-Cyril, Prestige comments that what the author appears to have had in mind is

> …a permeation or co-inherence between the two natures similar to that which Gregory of Nyssa conceived between the persons of the Trinity… The two natures are not confused, but as each occupies the whole extension of the same hypostasis they must, on the physical metaphor, be regarded as interpenetrative… In reality, as the process of permeation is one-sided and especially since neither of the co-inherent entities in the case of Christ is conceived of as genuinely concrete, *the metaphor is forced and not profoundly illuminative of the Christological problem*. It is little more than word-play to maintain that two abstractions are co-inherent.[338]

Prestige believes that this change of meaning may perhaps be not deliberate but accidental. It may have happened simply because *perichoresis* was a rare term that did not have a 'very clearly defined theological connotation'. Another reason could have been philological in nature. Firstly, the word was a compound of χωρέω, meaning both 'to go' and 'to contain' and secondly, it was used generally in order to describe 'the permeation of matter by God'. As a result, and building on previous Christological uses of the word, as well as on the red-hot iron analogy used by Maximus, 'the accidental connection of περιχωρέω and χωρέω may well have been decisive in determining him in all innocence to find in *perichoresis* a sense which as yet it had never possessed'.[339]

At this point we need to make a clear distinction between the abstract and the concrete entities involved. When we talk about God, or man, or Christ, we are dealing with objectively existing realities or beings. However, when we theorise about *ousia*, be it divine or human, we are dealing with abstractions. The term *perichoresis*, which is very appropriate for describing the way concrete realities relate to each other, appears to be completely inadequate when used to describe the way abstract notions relate to each other. 'The chief problem with [Christological] *perichoresis*'; as Gunton has argued, 'is that it reifies the natures. Natures are surely not things or hypostases, but ways of being. *Perichoresis* is surely between entities, not ways of being'.[340]

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[338] Prestige, *God*, 295–296 (our emphasis).

[339] Prestige, *God*, 296.

[340] Transcribed from a personal email communication, dated July 1st, 1997.

Otto observes that in fact 'the Christological use of *perichoresis* has diminished from the [time of the] Early Church'. At the same time, although it continues to be part of the Roman Catholic and Reformed dogmatic traditions, it is particularly within Lutheranism that '*perichoresis* retains a special Christological centrality'.[341] We need to underline in terms of this latter tradition the particular importance of Martin Chemnitz (1522–1586) who reiterated for Lutheranism the understanding of Christological *perichoresis* established by John of Damascus.[342]

Thus we may conclude that Christological *perichoresis* suffers from two important weaknesses. The first has to do with the fact that it attempts to describe in a forced manner a relationship between abstract notions – the two natures of Christ, which as we have shown above, following Prestige, are not 'genuinely concrete'.

The second weakness refers to the fact that the term *perichoresis*, gives, at least at first sight, the dangerous impression that there is a certain degree of reciprocity in the interpenetration of the two natures in the person of Christ. As we have shown already, it is quite risky to suggest that human nature really penetrates the divine nature in the person of Christ. In fact, if any such penetration can be predicated, it can be conceived of only from the divine to the human nature.

If our analysis is correct, then we may conclude that the term *perichoresis* is both inadequate and misleading when used in this context. In spite of the degree of protection offered by the Chalcedonian safeguards ('without confusion – ἀσυγχύτος; without change – ἀτρέπτως; without division – ἀδιαιρέτως; and without separation – ἀχωρίστως) the concept of *perichoresis* of the two natures of Christ is unhelpful, if not indeed a 'disastrous doctrine' as Gunton suggests[343], due to its apparently unavoidable Monophysite connotations.

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[341] Otto, 'Use and Abuse', 372. Pannenberg also points out the fact that Luther 'taught the real mutual interpenetration of the two natures [in the person of Jesus Christ] and loved the figure of the glowing iron'– *Jesus*, 299.

[342] M. Chemnitz, *The Two Natures in Christ*, tr. J. A. O. Preus (St. Louis and London: Concordia, 1971). On the same topic, see also two articles of Francis Watson: 'Martin Chemnitz's Perichoretic Ecclesiology', *Lutheran Forum*, 27, 1, Feb. 1993, 41–43and 'Martin Chemnitz and the Eastern Church: A Christology of the Catholic Consensus of the Fathers', *SVTQ*, 38, 1, 1994, 73–86. See also Pannenberg, *Jesus*, 300.

[343] C. E. Gunton, 'Review of B. Studer, *Trinity and Incarnation. The Faith of the Early Church* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1993)', *Pro Ecclesia*, 4, 2, 1995, 242.

3.3 Trinitarian Perichoresis

As argued above, until Pseudo-Cyril the only theological use of *perichoresis* was Christological and, according to Prestige, the term meant 'something quite different from co-inherence'.[344] In the following section, we will try to understand how this Christological concept began, so to speak, a new theological career which went far beyond the importance and usefulness of its original meaning.

According to Barth, trinitarian *perichoresis* 'has to be regarded as the one important form of the dialectic required to complete the concept of "three-in-oneness"' from the side of the unity of the divine essence and that of the original relations.[345] Twombly also claims that trinitarian *perichoresis*, in the full formulation given to it by John of Damascus,

> moved trinitarianism beyond the classic fourth-century formulation to a higher level of conceptual refinement by providing a linguistic vehicle which summed up and became the condensed expression of a more sophisticated way of relating identity and difference, a way opened up by the Council of Chalcedon and the debates and councils which followed in subsequent centuries.[346]

Finally, LaCugna argues, more controversially we believe, that 'the idea of *perichoresis* emerged as a substitute for the earlier patristic notion that the unity of God belonged to the person of God the Father'[347].

We may rightly ask why patristic theology needed this new term to describe the union of the divine persons in the Trinity. Prestige explains that the two terms used until Pseudo-Cyril, *ousia* and *hypostasis*, although both concrete, were not sufficient for describing the internal dynamics of the Trinity in a way that would safeguard essential monotheism. Theology was in need of a definition which, starting from the concept of *hypostasis*, would make it able 'to express the monotheistic being of God' to the same extent that such an endeavour was possible beginning with the common *ousia* of the divine persons. 'Without such a definition', believes Prestige, 'the recurrence of

[344] Prestige, *God*, 291.

[345] K. Barth, *Church Dogmatics* I/1, Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1936, 425–426.

[346] Twombly, *Perichoresis*, 16.

[347] LaCugna, *God for Us*, 270.

tritheism was almost inevitable'. This definition was provided by 'the formula of the *perichoresis* or *circumincessio* of three co-inherent persons in a single substance'.[348]

3.3.1 Prehistory of the Trinitarian Meaning

Before discussing the trinitarian use of the actual term *perichoresis*, it is important to underline the fact that the concept of the co-inherence of the divine persons was generally accepted some time before the term itself was used to describe it.

(1) *The biblical record*. Although the term *perichoresis* and its cognates are not found in the Greek text of the New Testament, the idea of the coinherence of the divine persons, especially of the Father and the Son,[349] is present, particularly in John's Gospel. This makes one author call John the 'theologian of *perichoresis*'.[350]

Passages such as John 10:30 'the Father and I are one', 10:38 'the Father is in me and I am in the Father', 14:10 'the Father who dwells in me does his works' and 14:11 'I am in the Father and the Father is in me' suggest the idea of the coinherence of the divine persons. At the same time, John 14:20 'I am in my Father and you in me and I in you' and 17:21 'that they may be one. As you, Father, are in me and I am in you, may they also be in us'[351] go even further, suggesting a certain analogy between the particular unity existing between the divine persons and the expected unity among believers, as well as between these and the Godhead.

(2) *Athanasius (c. 295–373)*. As Prestige explains,

> Athanasius remarks (*ad Serap. 3.4*) that the Son is omnipresent because He is in the Father and the Father is in him; the case is different with creatures, which are only to be found in separately determinate localities; but the Spirit who fills all things clearly is exempt from such limitation and must therefore be God and is in the Son and the Son is in the Father. Again he says (*ad Serap. 4.4*) that the Spirit belongs to the *ousia* of the Word and belongs to God and is said to be in him; He is not called Son, yet is not outside the Son; if we partake of the Spirit we possess the

[348] Prestige, *God*, 297.

[349] Alternatively, it is true that 'explicit scriptural basis for the mutual penetration of the Holy Spirit and the other two [divine] persons is lacking' – A. M. Bernejo, 'Circumincession', in *New Catholic Encyclopedia* (Washington DC: Catholic University of America, 1967) vol. 3 880, as quoted in S. K. Moroney, '*Perichoresis* in the Trinity', unpublished paper presented at the Midwestern section of the Evangelical Theological Society, Taylor University, March 22, 1996.

[350] Loichita, 5.

[351] All Bible quotations are from the *New Revised Standard Version with Apocrypha*.

> Son and if we possess the Son, we possess the Spirit. Again (*ib. 12*), since the Son is in the Father, He is also present in everything in which the Father is present; nor is the Spirit absent; for the holy, blessed and perfect Trinity is indivisible.[352]

As one can easily observe, the language of Athanasius is still strictly bound to the biblical record. As Prestige comments, this 'means, in effect, that the fact was accepted and arguments were based on it, but as yet little attempt was being made to present a reasoned interpretation of it'.[353] Nevertheless, it 'provided the background for the doctrine of coinherence'[354] and for the future trinitarian developments of the Cappadocians and of Cyril, who succeeded in moving the discussion beyond the confines of the scriptural text into the realm of philosophical and theological argumentations.

(3) *Hilary of Poitiers (c. 300–367)*. Although a Father of the Church in the west, Hilary learned his theology in the east. It is not surprising then that he plays an important role in this prehistory of *perichoresis*.

He tries to explain (*de Trin. 3*) how it is possible that 'the divine persons can reciprocally contain one another, so that one should permanently envelop and also be permanently enveloped by the other'. Even if this is impossible for the human mind to comprehend, it can still be true of God, because of the special nature of God: 'what man cannot understand, God can be'.[355]

(4) *Gregory of Nyssa (c. 335–394)*. Gregory never uses the noun *perichoresis*, but he employs 'two other equally evocative and dynamic terms: *peripheresis* and *anacyclesis*, as well as one which is implicit: *cyclophoroumene*'.[356] Yet, Gregory employs the term five times in its verbal form, in relation to the cycle of life. Stramara observes that although Gregory 'does not utilize the verb to elucidate the interpenetration of the

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[352] Prestige, *God*, 284–285.

[353] Prestige, *God*, 286.

[354] Torrance, *Doctrine of God*, 168.

[355] Prestige, *God*, 285.

[356] D. F. Stramara jr., 'Gregory of Nyssa's Terminology for Trinitarian *Perichoresis*', *Vigiliae Christianae*, 53, 3, 1998, 263.

Divine persons or the circular movement operative within their midst, the theology is present all the same'.[357]

Gregory appears to have deliberately avoided the use of the term *perichoresis* because of the 'physical connotation of the Stoic usage', meaning co-mixture of material elements, which he may have deemed inappropriate to describe the divine persons, particularly in the context of his dispute with Eunomius.

In order to convey the idea of the coinherence of the divine persons in the Trinity, Gregory uses terms like 'περιφέρω' (carry around or whirl about) and ἀνακύκλησις' (presumptively encompassing or circular intermingling)[358] in contexts such as *Contra Eunomium 3.7*, *Epistula 38.8*, *Ad Ablabium GNO 3.1*. Stramara summarises Gregory's formulation of this idea as follows: 'The Father embosoms the Son and envelops the Spirit within himself; the Son enthrones the Father and enfolds the Spirit within himself; and the Spirit enshrines the Father and encompasses the Son within himself. Each participates in the utterfullness of mutual inclusivity and co-extensive existence… The Divine persons are inextricably intertwined'.[359]

(4) *Cyril of Alexandria (c. 370–444)*. After the Cappadocians, Cyril is the Church Father who emphasises the unity of God once more, deducing from it the plurality in the Godhead.

The Alexandrian seeks to explain the possibility of the co-inherence of the separate and distinguishable divine persons in the same divine *ousia* by the use of a set of illustrations (*com. Joh.* 28D): the unity of a portrait with its subject, the sweetness of honey on a man's lips and the honey itself, the unity of the warmth of fire with the fire itself, etc.[360] Such analogies indeed have their limits and dangers, especially when they are drawn from the material realm, but one might legitimately ask if humans could comprehend anything about the divine without their help.

We need to underline, however, that Gregory of Nyssa had already (*adv. Ar. et Sab. 12*) used a much better analogy, that of 'sciences jointly and commonly pervading

[357] Stramara, 'Gregory', 257.

[358] Stramara, 'Gregory', 260–261.

[359] Stramara, 'Gregory', 263.

[360] Prestige, *God*, 288.

a single mind' to explain the unity and interpenetration of the *hypostaseis* in the one divine nature. The special value of this illustration

> …is due to its abandonment of the ancient type of analogy, drawn from material objects such as light or fire or water, in which the several persons are represented by disparate elements, in part substances and in part attributes. It substitutes a metaphor in which the entities that typify the persons are strictly equivalent… No room here remains for further subordinationist misunderstanding.[361]

We may therefore conclude from the above discussion that the idea of the co-inherence or reciprocal interpenetration of the divine persons, formulated in a more or less clear manner, was accepted long before Pseudo-Cyril used the term *perichoresis* to describe it.[362]

3.3.2 History of Trinitarian Perichoresis

We now explore briefly what Pseudo-Cyril and other patristic authors meant when they wrote about trinitarian *perichoresis*.

(1). *Pseudo-Cyril (7th century)*. The author explains in *De Trin. 10* that when we are talking about the Trinity, we still call him one God. This is possible because the three *hypostaseis* are united 'not so as to be confounded, but so as to adhere to one another and they possess co-inherence in one another without any coalescence or commixture'.[363] Harrison and Egan suggest that Pseudo-Cyril here stresses the unity of the Godhead, possibly 'to counter sixth century "tritheism"' and uses *perichoresis* 'in order to reinforce his affirmation of the oneness of the divine being'.[364]

On this point, Prestige makes the important observation that Pseudo-Cyril moves subtly on from the Christological *perichoresis* 'to' one another, to the trinitarian *perichoresis* 'in' one another, as he is now describing the co-inherence of three entities which share a common nature. Thus *perichoresis* 'to' one another is never used in relation to the Trinity, either by Pseudo-Cyril, or by the Damascene. The reason is that

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[361] Prestige, *God*, 290.

[362] Loichita, 6, also mentions among the precursors of the idea of *perichoresis* patristic authors who lived before Athanasius, such as Justin Martyr, Athenagoras, Irenaeus, Denis of Rome and Denis of Alexandria.

[363] Prestige, *God*, 298.

[364] Harrison, '*Perichoresis*', 59 and J. P. Egan, 'Toward Trinitarian *Perichoresis*: Saint Gregory the Theologian, *Oration 31.14*', *GOTR*, 39, 1, 1994, 93.

perichoresis 'to' one another might imply that the divine persons would be 'coterminous or co-extensive'. This would imply a form of Sabellianism, as Nicephoros of Constantinople pointed out (*ad Leonem III*, *PG*, 100.184D) in his protest against an understanding of the divine *hypostaseis* as being transformed and alternating (περιχωρέω) 'into' one another.[365]

In addition, Pseudo-Cyril provides an expanded version of a passage in Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or. 31.14*, in which he discusses the issue of the Godhead existing undivided in separate beings.[366] Egan, in a significant article on this matter, has sought to determine the extent to which Gregory anticipates Pseudo-Cyril's teaching on trinitarian *perichoresis*. He argues convincingly, based on Pseudo-Cyril's additions to Gregory's text, that Pseudo-Cyril was dissatisfied with Gregory's presentation of divine unity and that he 'did not find in that text an understanding of trinitarian *perichoresis* identical with his own'.[367]

(2). *John of Damascus (650–750)*. There is wide scholarly agreement that it was the Damascene who gave trinitarian *perichoresis* the prominence it enjoys today.

Prestige concludes his analysis of the use of *perichoresis*, or co-inherence in the Church Fathers by stating that by the end of the seventh century 'nothing of importance remained to be added to the Greek patristic definition of the Trinity. It stands as a monument of inspired Christian rationalism.' In his opinion, all that John of Damascus had to do was to popularise what Pseudo-Cyril had already clarified.[368]

John uses trinitarian *perichoresis* in a variety of contexts (*rect. sent. 1*; *Jacob. 78*; *fid. ort. 1.8; 1.14; 4.18*; *nat. comp. 4*) invariably to mean co-inherence. He suggests that *perichoresis* is not a consequence of the divine unity, but another equivalent mode of speaking of it, which 'puts the co-inherence of the three persons on a level with their unity of nature as a ground of the divine unity, in a manner which constitutes a distinct advance in formal definition'. On the other hand, it should be pointed out that the Damascene 'revived an assimilation of the definitions of the Trinity and the incarnation

[365] Prestige, *God*, 298–299.

[366] For a slightly different angle on this topic, see also J. P. Egan, 'Primal Cause and Trinitarian *Perichoresis* in Gregory Nazianzen's Oration 31.14', *Studia Patristica*, 27, 1993, 21–28.

[367] Egan, 'Trinitarian *Perichoresis*', 93.

[368] Prestige, *God*, 299.

(*de nat. comp. 4*)' based on *perichoresis*. Thus he argues that 'in the holy Trinity we speak of three *hypostaseis* united by their *perichoresis*; why then refuse to admit in the incarnation two natures united by their *perichoresis*?' Nevertheless, argues Prestige, 'the assimilation is only partial, directed against the Monophysite position.'[369]

Harrison concludes her thorough analysis of *perichoresis* in the Fathers by stating that 'in the Trinity, symmetry is paramount, though a certain asymmetry[370] occurs in that the Father is the origin of the Son and the Spirit and thus also is the foundation of their mutual coinherence'. This abiding of the divine persons in each other involves a sort of dynamism, 'an eternal movement of love', without compromising the eternal impassibility of God.[371]

3.3.3 Evaluation

Trinitarian *perichoresis* describes 'the intensely intimate presence of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit with, to and in one another, without their dissolution into a monistic mass or the subjection of one person to the other(s)'.[372]

According to Prestige, the fact that Pseudo-Cyril perceived the fruitfulness of the concept of *perichoresis*, used up to this point only in a Christological sense, for clarifying the doctrine of the Trinity is the author's 'greatest and wisest innovation. If the conception of interpenetration is forced in relation to the natures of Christ, it is an admirable description of the union of the three persons of God'.[373] He also argues that

> in retrospect, it appears that the long history of the evolution of trinitarian doctrine is the record, on the one hand, of orthodox insistence on the true and full deity of the three persons historically revealed, as against the attempts of heresy to maintain the doctrine of divine unity by misconceived and mischievous short-circuits… On the other hand, the history is the record of a long struggle, in the face of heresy, to express and explain, consonantly with the retention of the facts of experience the true unity of God. By a full use of the subtlety of Greek thought and language, it

[369] Prestige, *God*, 299.

[370] On this idea see also Fiddes, *Participating in God*, 79.

[371] Harrison, '*Perichoresis*', 65.

[372] R. Kress, 'Unity in Diversity and Diversity in Unity: Toward an Ecumenical Perichoresic Kenotic Trinitarian Ontology', *Dialogue and Alliance*, 4, 3, 1990, 67.

[373] Prestige, *God*, 296–297.

was laid down that God is a single objective Being in three objects of presentation.[374]

Torrance also argues convincingly that after the semi-technical Christological term *perichoresis* had been 'refined and changed' in order to express the complete interpenetration of the divine persons, 'it may not be applied to the hypostatic union of divine and human natures in Christ, without serious damage to the doctrine of Christ. Whenever that has been attempted in ancient and modern times, without qualification, it has resulted in some form of docetic rationalising and depreciating of the humanity of Christ'.[375]

In the same manner, by promoting trinitarian *perichoresis*, John of Damascus

> …compensated for his Christological indiscretion by an advance of real theological value… What John of Damascus did was to remedy the defect by extending to "theology" the term he had derived from the Christology of Maximus. He extended it not in the semi-technical sense of "interchange" or "reciprocity" which was its proper meaning, but in the new and fully technical meaning of "interpenetration" in which he himself understood it, a sense really unsuited to Christology but admirably expressive of trinitarian unity. So much more suitable is it for this purpose that Bishop Bull observed (*def. Nic. Creed* IV 4.14). "When some of the ancients also attribute circuminsession to the two natures of Christ, which they say interpenetrate each other, we must understand them to use the expression in a less proper sense". For, as he pointed out, the three persons are commensurate but the two natures are not'.[376]

However, although trinitarian *perichoresis* appears to have been receiving increasing attention in the last few decades,[377] Otto observes in a recent article that

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[374] Prestige, *God*, 300.

[375] Torrance, *Doctrine of God*, 102.

[376] Prestige, 'Περιχωρέω', 244.

[377] Among the many articles written lately on this topic we mention here just a few more, besides the ones that have been already mentioned or will be discussed later in our work: C. Sorc, 'Die perichoretischen Beziehungen im Leben der Trinität und in der Gemeinschaft der Menschen', *Evangelische Theologie*, 51, 2, 1998, 100–119; B. Hebblethwaite, '*Perichoresis*: Reflections on the Doctrine of The Trinity ', *Theology*, 80, July 1977, 255–261; P. Stremer, 'Perichorese', *Archiv für Begriffsgeschichte*, 27, 1983, 9–55.

'some have recently begun to use the term *perichoresis* without the mutual penetration in the one divine nature of the three persons'.[378]

Otto is correct when he argues that *perichoresis* requires an ontological basis, if the relations involved are to be 'real and not merely logical'. Consequently, 'any use of *perichoresis* apart from the essential unity of the divine nature is vacuous'.[379] Gunton concurs with this conclusion when he argues that there are two essential requirements for a correct doctrine of the Trinity. The first is a clear conceptual distinction between the person of the Son and that of the Spirit, while the second is 'an engagement with ontology'.[380]

Otto identifies Moltmann[381] as the 'vanguard' of this deontologising misuse of the term under discussion.[382] In his opinion, Moltmann's use of *perichoresis* 'is based on an *analogia relationis* devoid of the requisite *analogia entis*… *Perichoresis* is here emasculated of its essential basis and is wrongly employed'.[383] We must admit that when one reads such statements of Moltmann as 'we must dispense with both the concept of the one substance and the concept of the identical subject'[384] it is quite easy to draw such conclusions. But are they truly warranted? The root of such deontologising formulations of the perichoretic unity of the divine persons is claimed by Otto to lie in 'the Hegelian structure of Moltmann's thought'. Thus, argues Otto, 'it is Hegel who reduced all questions of *being* (or ontology) to questions about the structures and forms of human experience'.[385]

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[378] Otto, 'Use and Abuse', 372.

[379] Otto, 'Use and Abuse', 376–377.

[380] C. E. Gunton, 'Augustine, the Trinity and the Theological Crisis of the West', *SJT*, 43, 1, 1990, 56.

[381] Otto, 'Use and Abuse', 372. Surprisingly and without any justification, Otto also places Gunton in the same category (p. 367). Against this, see for instance Gunton's insistence in the context of his discussion of the analogical use of *perichoresis* that 'a theology of createdness is *necessarily concerned with ontology* [emphasis ours]: with the shape that things are given of their relation to their creator'. The same ontological implication is present when Gunton complains, with Bebbington, about the fact that ' one of the marks of modernism's view of things is a tendency to attempt to envisage relations apart from the persons who are related' – Gunton, *The One*, 166, 169.

[382] A similar position is expressed by O'Donnell, who, according to Moroney, criticises Moltmann for advocating 'a merely moral or intentional unity which falls short of the traditional notion of God's unity of being' – J. O'Donnell, 'The Trinity as Divine Community', *Gregorianum*, 69, 1, 1988, 21.

[383] Otto, 'Use and Abuse', 384.

[384] J. Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom of God* (London: SCM, 1981) 150.

[385] Otto, 'Use and Abuse', 374.

Without denying in any way the role that Hegelianism has played in the formulation of Moltmann's theology, we want to argue that Otto's criticism is at least partly unjust and misdirected.[386] We suggest, first of all, that Moltmann's relational definition of *perichoresis* is not so much rooted in Hegel as influenced by Orthodox theology in general and the trinitarian theology of the Cappadocians in particular. For them, although the divine *ousia* is presupposed, the ground of the trinitarian unity is conceived as being rooted not in the impersonal concept of the common *ousia*, but in the person of the Father. Thus in the Orthodox perspective, the divine persons do not *have* a common *ousia*, but they *are* the common *ousia*. For the Orthodox, there is no such thing as an unhypostatic divine nature.

If our observation is correct, then Moltmann's insistence that the unity between the members of the Trinity is neither substantial nor numerical, but is rooted in their communal love it is not a denial of the ontological basis of trinitarian *perichoresis* but just another way of describing what Torrance called the 'onto-relations' that define the Holy Trinity.[387] The same onto-relational approach is taken for instance by Dearborn, who discusses it in the context of divine grace and salvation. Thus he argues that the salvation that the trinitarian God provides for fallen humanity is 'neither solely ontological', which would imply a sort of 'automatic', 'impersonal' '*ex opere operato* efficacy', nor exclusively relational, as if it were 'an extrinsic encounter through faith without any ontological change' in the redeemed human subjects. Consequently, in order to have an adequate understanding of salvation, we have to affirm both its ontological and its relational dimensions.[388] We believe Moltmann would concur with what Dearborn has to say here.

This charge of deontologising *perichoresis* may be more pertinent, at least apparently, in relation to the more recent work of Fiddes on the Trinity. In an effort to conceive of a way to overcome the limited sense in which we have traditionally spoken of humans being 'interior' to God, he departs from the understanding of the Trinity as 'persons *in* relationships' and argues for an approach based on the idea of 'persons *as*

[386] Moroney ('*Perichoresis*', 8) argues in much the same way that O'Donnell's criticism of Moltmann is equally unjustified.

[387] Torrance, *Doctrine of God*, 102.

[388] Dearborn, 'God', 290

relationships'.[389] This perspective on the divine persons has a direct effect on the way Fiddes understands intra-trinitarian dynamics. For him, the correct analogy is not between divine persons and human persons, but between divine relations and human interrelations. Consequently, he prefers to talk about a '*perichoresis* of movements', rather than about the '*perichoresis* of divine persons'.[390] Fiddes believes that this shift of emphasis helps us to speak of full human participation in God.

The discussion above introduces us naturally to a less discussed aspect of *perichoresis*: its impact on divine-human relationships and its related cosmic implications.

3.4 Deification Perichoresis – *Presentation and Evaluation*

Besides the Christological and trinitarian meanings of *perichoresis* that we have discussed above, Harrison suggests that there is a third category, the interpenetration 'between God and deified human persons in the transfigured creation'.[391] The author does not offer a descriptive label for this concept which, for lack of a better term, we may call 'deification *perichoresis*'.[392] It would be useful to begin by analysing a few patristic texts that appear to suggest this meaning of *perichoresis*.

According to Harrison, Maximus the Confessor takes over Gregory's Christological use of *perichoresis* and extends its usage in order to speak of interpenetration between natures and of the energies of the incarnate Logos in deified human beings as well as in the transfigured creation.[393] This becomes obvious in a soteriological passage from *Cap D. 4.19*[394] that Harrison translates as follows:

> The soul's salvation is the consummation of faith. This consummation is the revelation of what has been believed. Revelation is the inexpressible

[389] Fiddes, *Participating in God*, 50.

[390] Fiddes, *Participating in God*, 73.

[391] Harrison, '*Perichoresis*', 55.

[392] Otto, 379, suggests 'cosmic *perichoresis*' as a descriptive label, but although this sense is included in the concept, if we qualify it by explaining that it refers to the whole creation, material and immaterial, inanimate and personal, we believe this description is too impersonal to be adequate. Dearborn, 'God', 289–290, also gives some attention to this aspect, describing it in a non-deification manner as 'the movement of perichoretic grace in salvation'.

[393] Harrison, '*Perichoresis*', 57.

[394] We have discussed this passage also in the section devoted to Christological *perichoresis*.

> interpenetration (περιχώρησις) of the believer with (or toward, πρὸς) the object of belief and takes place according to each believer's degree of faith. Through that interpenetration, the believer finally returns to his origin. The return is the fulfilment of desire. Fulfilment of desire is ever-active repose in the object of desire. Such repose is eternal uninterrupted enjoyment of this object. Enjoyment of this kind entails participation in supernatural divine realities. This participation consists in the participant becoming like that in which he participates. Such likeness involves, so far as this is possible, an identity with respect to energy between the participant and that in which he participates by virtue of the likeness. This identity with respect to energy constitutes the deification of the saints.[395]

Commenting on the passage above, Harrison concludes, in contrast with Prestige, that 'this strong understanding of participation in the divine indicates that *perichoresis* here must mean interpenetration, not something less'. The author invites us to observe that in the text under discussion 'created beings are said to penetrate into the divine, as it were, from below, even though it is brought about from above by God's activity'.[396]

Furthermore, as a passage in *Ambig. 17* appears to suggest, according to Maximus, interpenetration with the divine also extends to the natural created order that is divinised through grace. Thus concludes Harrison, 'for Maximus, coinherence appears to characterize realities at every level, as Lars Thunberg has indicated. Christ is at the center, but the effects of this hypostatic union in him between Creator and creation extend throughout the universe'.[397] The same idea is shared by Lossky, who states that 'this "*perichoresis*" or dynamic copenetration of what is created and uncreated in Christ finds its analogy in beings who are striving to become "gods by grace"'.[398]

The reason for the interest of some authors, particularly of the Orthodox persuasion, in underlining this alleged aspect of *perichoresis* is connected with their

[395] Harrison, '*Perichoresis*', 57–58.
[396] Harrison, '*Perichoresis*', 58.
[397] Harrison, '*Perichoresis*', 59.
[398] Lossky, *Vision*, 133.

interest in the doctrine of deification.[399] It is a brave and necessary attempt to explain how humans can truly participate in the divine, without this affecting God's transcendence. Often, however, these attempts fail to adequately address the parallel danger of Christ's humanity (and, consequently, ours) being abolished in the process. Staniloae himself warns about this danger when he states that 'God has not become human in order to abolish the content of our humanity'.[400] In this respect, we find it extremely significant that John of Damascus, the theologian of *perichoresis*, nowhere writes about personal salvation in terms of mutual indwelling. When dealing with this aspect of the life of faith he prefers the term 'participation'. And although we may be tempted to believe that the two concepts are synonymous, in fact

> *perichoresis* invariably refers to a constancy in the union of the realities so united which does not encompass the fluctuation of faith and obedience represented by human response to God. Here, the language of participation and communion, a language which allows for the possibility of flux, is more fitting and is indeed that which John uses in connection with salvation.[401]

In a useful comparison between the different meanings of *perichoresis*, Lawler argues that in trinitarian *perichoresis* the communion between the divine persons is 'fully and equally mutual'. In contrast to this, the Christological communion between the two natures of the incarnated Son of God is 'not-so-mutual' and metaphorical, while other kinds of perichoretic communion are 'even more metaphorical'.[402] For Harrison also there is an essential difference between Christological *perichoresis*, in whatever way it is understood and deification *perichoresis*. Where the latter is concerned, participation of the created order in the divine takes place, as Maximus puts it, 'so far as this is possible'. Maximus himself does not explain precisely what the limits of this kind of interpenetration might be. However, his qualifying statement may point to the fact that he was aware of the danger of the created order being obliterated or at least diminished in this posited co-mingling with the divine. We are not convinced that some of the Confessor's modern commentators are as careful as he was in this respect. Thus

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[399] Writing on this point, Thunberg ('Circumincession', 370) observes that for Maximus 'incarnation has man's divinisation as its purpose – and, more or less clearly articulated, the transfiguration of creation'.

[400] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:65.

[401] Twombly, *Perichoresis*, 183.

[402] Lawler, '*Perichoresis*', 53–54.

according to Lawler, 'to say that one body-person is the Body of Christ is… to say that Christ and the many-personed church are not, in fact, many distinct persons but are one person in communion, one great inseparable I. That can only be, again, by *perichoresis*'.[403] The author does not appear to be aware that by arguing in this manner, even if the words are intended only metaphorically, he is running the risk of letting the identity of the individual members of the church be obliterated in the all-encompassing 'one body-person'. The same criticism would be true when *perichoresis* is applied in a similarly imprudent manner to the relationship between husband and wife in the family or to the relationships between local churches in the Church universal.

We may conclude, then, that deification *perichoresis* shares the similar weaknesses of its Christological counterpart, under which it can be easily subsumed. This is how Gunton has expressed the central problem we encounter here: '[Christological, and, we may add, deification] *Perichoresis* increases the danger that the divinity will not simply remove fallenness, but overwhelm humanity. I am in general, for this reason, suspicious of all conceptions of divinisation, which is dubious biblically, despite the one text [2 Pet. 1:4]'.[404]

3.5 The Theological Usefulness of Perichoresis

Perichoresis is definitely not a widely used term in contemporary theology. Rather, 'the concept of *perichoresis* often appears as an example of the way in which the doctrine is most speculative and useless'.[405] Thus, Gibbon described this notion as 'the deepest and darkest corner of the whole theological abbys'.[406] At the same time, the renewal of interest in the doctrine of the Trinity in the second half of the twentieth century has brought with it the opportunity of exploring the theological usefulness of this concept in new ways. Moreover, as Connolly argues, following Mouroux, there is in modern man a fundamental search for a community of persons. However, there is a risk that the communitarian spirit may be superseded by a collectivistic life-style. The solution to

[403] Lawler, '*Perichoresis*', 62.

[404] Transcribed from a private email conversation, on July 1st, 1997.

[405] Gunton, *The One*, 163.

[406] Quoted in Kallistos of Diokleia, 'The Human Person as an Icon of the Trinity', *Sobornost*, 8, 2, 1986, 11.

this threat is rooted, according to Mouroux, in trinitarian *circumincessio*. This is so because 'the Trinity does not allow the collective. The Trinity is a mystery of communion in personal plenitude and total unity. It is the community which finds actualization in a pure and absolute fashion – communion itself'.[407]

In what follows, we would like to suggest, with Gunton, that *perichoresis* is not only a very useful concept for modern theology, but that 'it opens up all kinds of possibilities for thought'.[408] Consequently, we will present just a few of the suggested ways in which *perichoresis* could provide a basis for new theological insights.

As we have shown above, Moltmann is among those theologians who have made extensive use of trinitarian *perichoresis* for building their social models of the Trinity. Thus he argues:

> The doctrine of *perichoresis* links together in a brilliant way the threeness and the unity, without reducing the threeness to unity, or dissolving the unity in the threeness… If the divine unity is understood perichoretically, then it cannot be consummated by merely one subject at all. It is bound to consist of the living fellowship of the three persons who are related to one another and exist in one another.[409]

Boff,[410] like Moltmann, uses *perichoresis* as a means of arguing for the equality of the divine persons, not merely ontologically, but also functionally. Both theologians reject the monarchy of the Father,[411] since they consider such a trinitarian construction as a possible source of oppression when transposed socially and politically. Thus for these two authors, the perichoretic communion of the divine persons becomes the basis for social liberation. At the same time, as Boff suggests,

> De la vision trinitaire émerge un modèle de l'église qui est davantage communion que hiérarchie, davantage service que pouvoir, davantage circulaire que pyramidal,

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[407] J. Mouroux, *La Trinité*, course-notes, 33, as quoted in I. G. Connolly, '*Perichoresis* and the Faith that Personalizes, According to Jean Mouroux', *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses*, 62, 4, 1986, 362–363.

[408] Gunton, *The One*, 163.

[409] Moltmann, *Trinity*, 175.

[410] L. Boff, *Trinité et société* (Paris, Cerf, 1990).

[411] Moltmann, *Trinity*, 129–132; 191–202; Boff, *Trinité*, 161–162.

davantage geste d'accolade que d'inclination révérente face à l'autorité (*proskynesis*).[412]

Furthermore, Kings claims that *perichoresis* could also offer a new perspective on missions which would have three important consequences: (1) Christian witness and social involvement will be perceived not as mutually exclusive, separate or even parallel, but as coinherent dimensions of missions; (2) subordination and primacy will become irrelevant in missions; and (3) 'social responsibility and evangelism [will] glorify each other'.[413] The main reason for this theologically grounded missiology is that, according to this Anglican missiologist, 'in developing plans for world evangelization, strategy must not triumph over theology, for the unity of the Church is an integral part of its witness. If it is not, the result may be fatness, not growth. The ultimate question is not whether something is useful but whether it is true'.[414]

One other sphere where *perichoresis* may shed new light is that of the relationship between male and female. McKelway[415] explores this 'perichoretic possibility of mutuality and exchange without loss of identity' in Barth's doctrine of the *imago Dei* and its implications for male-female relationships. The starting point of this analysis is Barth's use of Bonhoeffer's discovery[416] that '"male and female" stand in direct apposition to the "image of God"' in the creation story of Genesis 1.[417]

McKelway's main argument is based on Barth's allusion to trinitarian *perichoresis* as pertaining to the relations between men and women in the following fragment: 'In the *grand pas de deux* of the ballet… the movements performed by the dancers, together with the music, point towards the consummate reciprocal harmony of man and woman that God intended when "male and female" he created them'.[418] Barth

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[412] Boff, *Trinité*, 180. We only had access to the French version of this text.

[413] G. Kings, 'Evangelicals in Search of Catholicity: Theological Reflections on Lausanne II', *Anvil*, 7, 2, 1990, 121.

[414] Kings, 'Evangelicals', 128.

[415] A. J. McKelway, 'Perichoretic Possibilities in Barth's Doctrine of Male and Female', *The Princeton Seminary Bulletin*, 7, 3, 1986, 231–243. See also the application of *perichoresis* to the sacrament of marriage in Lawler, '*Perichoresis*', 54–59.

[416] D. Bonhoeffer, *Schöpfung und Fall*, 1933, commented on in McKelway, 'Perichoretic Possibilities', 233.

[417] McKelway, 'Perichoretic Possibilities', 233.

[418] K. Barth, *CD*, III/1, p183ff, 195. See also McKelway, 232–233.

goes even further than this and, taking as his starting point the perichoretic super- and sub-ordination in the Trinity, argues for 'subordination without inferiority' in this type of human relationship.[419] The direct implication of this *analogia relationis* is that the sexual distinctiveness of male and female can be maintained, if the conditions of mutuality and reciprocity presupposed by the concept of *perichoresis* are respected. Thus concludes McKelway, 'in light of Barth's doctrine of the Trinity we can say that the perichoretic possibility of a God who is human means that in the power and the grace of his humanity we also as women and men can be who we are even as we commit ourselves to relationships of mutuality and reciprocity'.[420]

Perichoresis has also been suggested as a basis for envisaging new ways of looking at such different theological topics as global spirituality,[421] religious pluralism,[422] feminism,[423] human individuality and personality,[424] the communion of Christians in the Body of Christ,[425] the relationship between Mary and the Church,[426] the Christology of the icon,[427] and even the development of dogma.[428]

The simple enumeration above suggests an almost limitless set of possibilities in the theological use of *perichoresis*. Nevertheless, as Gunton rightly points out, the mechanical transfer of conclusions from the relationships between the trinitarian persons to that of the dynamics of creation is unwarranted, because of the essential ontological differences between these two realms – that of the Creator and that of

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[419] See A. J. McKelway, 'The Concept of Subordination in Barth's Special Ethics', *SJT*, 32, 4, 1979, 352–354.

[420] McKelway, 'Perichoretic Possibilities', 240–241.

[421] B. Bruteau, 'Global Spirituality and the Integration of East and West', *Cross Currents*, 35, 2–3, 1985, 190–205.

[422] Thunberg, 'Circumincession', 364–372 – the author uses *perichoresis* for an analysis of R. Panikkar's attempt at a Christian interpretation of the *advaitic* understanding of existence.

[423] B. Bruteau, 'Neo-feminism as communion consciousness', *Anima*, 5, Fall 1978, 11–21.

[424] See A. McFadyen, 'The Trinity and Human Individuality. Conditions for Relevance', *Theology*, 95, 763, 1992, 10–18; F. Buri, 'Trinity and Personality' in R. P. Scharlemann (ed.), *Naming God* (New York: Paragon, 1995) 135–147 – published initially in *Iliff Review*, 40 Winter 1983, 15–24.

[425] Lawler, '*Perichoresis*', 59–64.

[426] N. Hoffmann, 'Zur "Perichorese" von Maria und Kirche in der Sicht M. J. Scheebens' in H. Hammans *et al*. (eds.) *Geist und Kirche. Studien in Theologie in Umfelt der Beiden Vatikanischen Konzilien* (Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 1990) 247–275.

[427] Azkoul, '*Perichoresis*', 67–85.

[428] C. J. Weborg, 'Jaroslav Pelikan on the Emergence of Christian Doctrine: *Perichoresis* and Perimeter', *Covenant Quarterly*, 30, May 1973, 3–14.

created beings. Thus, we will need to formulate a number of qualifications in order to avoid moving too quickly from the level of the divine to that of creation.[429]

As we have already pointed out, the concept of trinitarian *perichoresis* has to be used not by direct transfer but analogically, or, as Gunton puts it, 'apophatically, if we are to prevent a simple equation between the use of temporal and spatial concepts of God and of finite realities'.[430] By doing this, we also avoid 'reading space and time upwards into God' as, believes Gunton, 'happens in some modern theology, for instance Process theology, but [still] draw[ing] out the implications of God's economic relatedness to time and space'.[431]

The brief observations we have made in the last section lead us to the conclusion that trinitarian *perichoresis* is a seminal concept that opens new doors for theological reflection in various domains of the theological realm, including that of the doctrine of the Church. This strengthens our conviction regarding the usefulness of this concept for the analysis of Staniloae's trinitarian ecclesiology.

3.6 Conclusions

As we have demonstrated above, although the concept of *perichoresis* and the term with its cognates appeared quite early in Christian theology, it was rarely used until the eighth century, when it became widely known both in the east and in the west through the work of John of Damascus.

Christological and trinitarian *perichoresis* are the main meanings that this word conveys (deification *perichoresis* is a secondary meaning, which could be subsumed under the Christological sense of the word). Between these meanings there is clearly a certain parallelism. Firstly, both are ways of conceiving the divine unity: in the former, between the divine and human natures in the person of Jesus Christ, while in the latter, between the three divine persons that share the same divine *ousia*. At the same time, both emphasise, in various ways and with different degrees of success, the idea that the unity to which they point does not imply commingling. This is the place where the use of the four Chalcedonian adverbs becomes essential.

[429] Gunton, *The One,* 163–165.

[430] Gunton, *The One,* 165.

[431] Gunton, *The One,* 165, n. 13.

Nevertheless, the two concepts display significant differences. In the case of the Trinity, *perichoresis* is complete and wholly reciprocal, although there is also a certain degree of asymmetry, in the sense that, at least from an Eastern Orthodox perspective, the person of the Father is regarded as the originator, from whom the Son is eternally born and the Spirit eternally proceeds. At the same time, Christological *perichoresis* is, according to most authors, essentially incomplete and asymmetrical, if not unilateral, as the penetration of the human nature by the divine nature in Christ Jesus occurs, so to speak 'from above'.

Also, the ontological basis of trinitarian *perichoresis* is the identity of being between the persons of the Trinity, which is rooted in the person of the Father, while the ontological basis of Christological *perichoresis* is the unity of the person of the Incarnate Logos.

In terms of evaluation of the meaning of *perichoresis* and its cognates, theologians can be divided by their interpretations into two main groups. The first group, represented by authors such as Prestige, Stead and Lampe, argues that up to Pseudo-Cyril and John of Damascus *perichoresis* had the semi-technical meaning of 'alternation', 'interchange', 'reciprocation' or 'rotation', applied particularly to Christology. These authors suggest that it was only after the sixth century that the term received its technical meaning of 'interpenetration' and was applied to the doctrine of the Trinity.

The members of the second group, represented by, among others, Harrison, Wolfson and Disandro, argue that the term under scrutiny had from the beginning the technical theological meaning of interpenetration, whether it was used in Christology or triadology. They suggest that this meaning is rooted in the Stoic concept of 'mixture' (κράσις) and implies the idea of a complete mutual interpenetration of two substances that preserve intact their identity and properties.

We have argued that the trinitarian concept of *perichoresis*, unanimously perceived as a strong pillar of trinitarian dogma, is the one uncontested meaning of the word under scrutiny. It offers multiple opportunities for developing theological models capable of offering new perspectives on the ways God relates to creation in general and to humanity in particular, provided that we take the necessary precautions in order to

avoid moving too quickly from the level of trinitarian relations to that of the dynamics of creation.

In our subsequent discussion, we will reflect on the way trinitarian *perichoresis* helps us to build a perichoretic model of the Church that can shed new light on the trinitarian ecclesiology of Staniloae.

4 A Perichoretic Model of the Church

We have shown in the previous chapter that *perichoresis* is, as Gunton contends, 'a concept heavy with spatial and temporal conceptuality, involving movement, recurrence and interpenetration', and that such an approach is 'an implication of the unity-in-variety of the divine economic involvement in the world.[432] On the other hand, *perichoresis* is not just a speculative theological concept, but also a reflection of the Church's worship addressed to the triune God who has been revealed to us supremely in the incarnation of Jesus Christ. This is how Torrance expresses this idea:

> …the basic conception of *perichoresis* arises out of joyful belief in Jesus as Christ and Saviour, and out of worship and thanksgiving for the saving love of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit who reconciles us to himself and takes us up into Communion with himself.[433]
>
> On the other hand, *perichoresis* is a truth about the intimate relations in the divine Life which we cannot but formulate in fear and trembling, with adoration and awe, and in recognition of the poverty and inadequacy of the language we use in trying to put into words understanding of the mystery of the oneness and threefoldness of God's self-revelation to us. We could not do this were it not for the incarnation of God's Word in Jesus Christ and his gracious condescension to address us in human form of thought and speech.[434]

Reflecting on the richness of trinitarian *perichoresis*, Hebblethwaite complains, however, that this 'monument of Christian rationalism' as Prestige calls it,[435] together with other similar concepts, has lost its power in theology.[436] As we have demonstrated in the previous chapters of this section of our work, this is not difficult to imagine for the period of modernity, when religious symbolism and the power of metaphor have lost much of their power. This appears still to be true even today, although we have

[432] C. E. Gunton, *The One*, 163.

[433] Torrance, *Doctrine of God*, 172.

[434] Torrance, *Doctrine of God*, 172–173.

[435] Prestige, *God*, 299.

[436] B. Hebblethwaite, '*Perichoresis* – Reflections on the Doctrine of the Trinity', in *The Incarnation. Collected Essays in Christology* (Cambridge: CUP, 1987) 12.

witnessed a certain degree of recovery of religious symbolism and an increasing interest in the doctrine of the Trinity.

The first possible reason for this state of affairs could be the impact of 'scholastic' rationalism and the lack of creativity that continues to dominate the contemporary theological scene. Secondly, there is the lack of trust in the ability of old concepts developed in other theological contexts, to serve in a very different thought environment. Thirdly, in the particular case of *perichoresis*, this lack of emphasis could be due to the supposedly secondary role that this concept could legitimately play in trinitarian theological constructs. Finally, according to theologians such as LaCugna, who reject the concept of immanent Trinity as the starting point for trinitarianism, we cannot develop an understanding of *perichoresis* that describes the intra-trinitarian dynamic and then use it to illuminate our human existence under God.[437]

Nevertheless, as we have already shown, there are theologians today who understand the rich potential of trinitarian *perichoresis* to open new doors for theological reflection on a variety of topics of great import for the contemporary theological scene. Among these, theology proper, anthropology and ecclesiology have received particular attention. In what follows, we will present a summary of the main ideas on this topic, as they appear in particular works of McFadyen, Gunton, and Volf.

4.1 The legitimacy of the use of perichoresis *in ecclesiology*

The main interest in McFadyen[438] concerns the subject of human individuality. Admittedly, he deals here only implicitly with ecclesiology. His initial contention is that we cannot move immediately from a social understanding of the Trinity to constructing trinitarian anthropology, without taking in consideration the logical basis for such a conceptual transfer. Thus, McFadyen argues that we have to avoid 'the temptation of deriving our understanding of the human being directly from that of the divine being'.[439]

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[437] LaCugna, *God for Us*, 270–278. LaCugna discusses this issue in the context of the feminist theology of Wilson-Kastner and the liberation theology of Leonardo Boff.

[438] A. McFadyen, 'The Trinity and Human Individuality. The Conditions for Relevance', *Theology*, 95, 763, 1992, 10–18.

[439] McFadyen, 'Trinity', 11.

The risk, argues the author, is not so much with the anthropology that this kind of transfer would produce as with the defective process involved, which in turn will affect the results themselves. 'If the Trinity functions only as a symbol, the relationship between God and humanity and creation becomes something entirely noetic'. As a result, 'we are left with an entirely static picture of a Platonistic universe in which the triune God's sociality and communication is restricted to the ideal world of pure forms'.[440] This would clearly be incompatible with the biblical revelation of the Christian God who is not just a 'regulative idea' working from outside of our world, but is personally involved in the transformation of fallen humanity through the incarnation of the Logos and the power of the Spirit. Therefore, explains McFadyen,

> …dangling a model of perfect community above the heads of fallen human beings does nothing to empower or enable us to reconstitute ourselves or our relationships; all it gives anyone with an appreciation of the brokenness of human persons, relationships and societies is a sense of guilt and hopelessness. For the redemption of human individuality and sociality what is needed is not a model, but the communication of the energies of true relations and individuation from the triune being of God.[441]

Through this argument, the author not only repudiates the idea of the 'easy' transfer from the level of divinity to the human level, but also formulates a pertinent critique of many contemporary theological models built on the concept of the social Trinity.

The same kind of reasoning applies to the too hasty transfer from divine interrelations to human relations in general and to relationships in the church in particular. It is in fact chiefly in this particular area that McFadyen finds the trinitarian concept of *perichoresis* to be very helpful, the reason being that it not only describes the way God is in himself, but also 'characterizes all of God's triune external communications as well'.[442] Thus, God relates to humans and the cosmos, in creation and redemption, in ways that build individuality,[443] freedom, and dialogue.

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[440] McFadyen, 'Trinity', 12.

[441] McFadyen, 'Trinity', 13.

[442] McFadyen, 'Trinity', 15.

[443] We need to underline at this point that McFadyen does not define individuality in disconnected individualistic terms, but builds it on the interrelatedness that characterizes the dynamics of the divine persons, as his discussion of *perichoresis* proves convincingly.

Gunton's concern in his trinitarian critique of modernity is to build a case for *perichoresis* as an open transcendental,[444] which 'enables us to understand something of the interconnectedness of both persons and things'.[445] Like McFadyen, Gunton warns us against the simple conceptual transfer from the level of the Godhead to that of finite realities. This is why he suggests, as we have already mentioned, an analogic, 'apophatic' use of *perichoresis*, in which 'due allowance' is made for 'the distinction in relations between God and the world'. Thus, according to Gunton, 'to speak theologically of the economy is to speak of the way in which God constitutes reality: makes it what it is through the activities we call creation and redemption. To speak of divine *perichoresis* is to essay a conceptual mapping, on the basis of that economy, of the being of God'.[446]

Based on the above argument, Gunton suggests that the whole of reality is perichoretic 'in that everything in it contributes to the being of everything else, enabling everything to be what it distinctly is'. This should be even more so when we are concerned with humans created in the image of God and the ways they relate to each other. However, he complains that modernity has created 'non-perichoretic conceptions of relationality',[447] whether we have in view the individualism of the west or the collectivism of the east, both of which have strongly influenced ecclesial structures and the ecclesiologies that condone them.

In sharp contrasts to these, Gunton argues for 'a doctrine of human *perichoresis*,' in which human persons are reciprocally constitutive, and which affirms the indispensability of both personal identity and relationality. In this, Gunton is again concerned to emphasise that *perichoresis* works only as an analogy, with the accompanying necessary qualifications which are required when the concept is

[444] By 'open transcendental' the author means 'a notion, in some way basic to the human thinking process, which empowers a continuing and in principle unfinished exploration of the universal marks of being' – Gunton, *The One*, 142.

[445] Gunton, *The One*, 153.

[446] Gunton, *The One*, 165. See also 'The God of Jesus Christ', 329, where Gunton, warns against 'premature appeals to something called the social analogy'.

[447] Gunton, *The One*, 166, 169.

transferred from the level of infinite eternal divine being to that of finite fallen human beings.[448]

Volf, following Staniloae, defines *perichoresis* as 'the reciprocal interiority of the trinitarian persons'.[449] Volf's main interest is to build an understanding of the Church as an image of the Trinity. In order to do this he insists, as do McFadyen and Gunton, that 'in a strict sense, there can be no correspondence to the interiority of the divine persons at the human level'. The interiority of the divine persons to one another is radically different from the interiority of the divine persons to human beings and to the relative interiority of human beings to each other. Thus, applied at the ecclesial level, this means that 'only the *interiority of personal characteristics* can correspond to the interiority of the divine beings'.[450]

Volf starts from the Lord's Prayer in the Johannine record, where Christ intercedes with the Father that 'they may also be in us'. Based on this, he argues that we can still talk about the interiority of human beings to the divine persons, though not of a perichoretic unity of human beings (the text does not read 'may they also be *in one another*', observes Volf). However, 'human beings can be in the triune God only insofar as the Son is in them' and 'because the Son indwells human beings through the Spirit'. Consequently, what we have here 'is not the mutual *perichoresis* of human beings, but rather the indwelling of the Spirit common to everyone that makes the Church into a communion corresponding to the Trinity, a communion in which personhood and sociality are equiprimal'.[451]

From the discussion above, following McFadyen, Gunton and Volf, we believe we are warranted to conclude that there is a real sense in which we can talk about a qualified application of the concept of *perichoresis* at the level of ecclesiology.

Nevertheless, the process of transfer has to be done analogically and with great care, so that we do not move directly from the divine to the human level. Any

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[448] Gunton, *The One*, 166–170. In relation to the way fallenness affects the perichoretic orientation of creation, Gunton argues that even if this is 'distorted and delayed by sin and evil', at the same time evil does not take away altogether this orientation of the created reality.

[449] M. Volf, *After Our Likeness. The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 209, quoting from D. Staniloae, *Theology and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: SVSP, 1980) 385.

[450] Volf, *Likeness*, 210–211 (author's original emphasis).

[451] Volf, *Likeness*, 212–213.

'perichoretic model of the Church' needs to be rooted in a proper, biblically based, doctrine of creation, with a particular emphasis on anthropology, and on an understanding of redemption and of the way Christ and the Spirit mediate human and ecclesial participation in the divine.

We have established sufficiently, we believe, that *perichoresis* is an adequate and legitimate basis for contructing our ecclesiological model, particularly when we have to do with theological constructs of the Church that have the Trinity as their starting point. Or, this exactly what Staniloae, following the Eastern Orthodox tradition, has done with his ecclesiology. This is why we believe we are warranted to use the perichoretic model we are contructing further as a tool for evaluating Staniloae's trinitarian eclesiology. Yet, before doing that, we need to clarify the confines within which we are setting our discussion and, in order to eliminate misunderstandings, to explain what possible meanings of this model we do not intend to take in consideration in the present research.

4.2 What Is Not *Meant by the 'Perichoretic Model of the Church'*

Before going any further in formulating our 'perichoretic model of the Church', it would be useful to clarify what we do not mean by this expression. In order to do this, we need to keep in mind that

> …the intimate communion of the three Thous in the one God is fully and equally mutual, and this communion is the paradigm for all interpersonal communion. Compared to this divine communion [any other communion], including the not-so-mutual communion of the two natures in one Christ is communion only metaphorically. It images the communion of the three persons in one God only imperfectly. If we are to find *perichoresis* a useful theological category in which to explore marriage and church, we will have to understand in advance that in these cases it is even more metaphorical.[452]

This is why, before building up our model, we need to elucidate what we do not mean by it.

[452] M. G. Lawler, '*Perichoresis*: New Theological Wine in an Old Theological Wineskin', *Horizons*, 22, Spring 1995, 53–54.

Thus, firstly, by suggesting a perichoretic model of the Church as a tool for investigating Staniloae's trinitarian ecclesiology, we do not intend to communicate that *perichoresis* is the central concept in the work of this Romanian Orthodox theologian. In fact, it is necessary to underline that Staniloae never made an analysis of this concept in one specific text. Nevertheless, we want to argue that, as we believe will become clear further in our study, his whole theology, including his ecclesiology, is thoroughly permeated by the idea of trinitarian *perichoresis*. Consequently, by formulating such a model we are not introducing a foreign concept that could distort our understanding of his theological system, but we are applying to the study of his ecclesiology a model based on a concept that it informed thoroughly, though rather implicitly.

Secondly, we have not purposed to use this model as a tool to critique Staniloae's thought. As we have already stated before, we have a deep appreciation for his theology in general and in particular for the extent to which he is able to build his ecclesiology on a solid trinitarian basis. Rather, our sincere intention is to use the perichoretic model we are building here as a means to interpret his theology and to analyse the consistency of his trinitarian construct, with particular attention to his doctrine of the Church. Our working hypothesis is that, in spite of his persistent efforts, Staniloae's ecclesiology manifests some trinitarian inconsistencies, which will be evidenced by the use of our perichoretic model.

Thirdly, although it could be very tempting to do so, we will not root our model in the Christological or the deification meanings of *perichoresis*. Following the conclusions of our previous study on the history of *perichoresis*, we believe we will be building on a much firmer foundation if we ground our model in trinitarian *perichoresis*. This is also more consistent with the way Straniloae uses the concept of *perichoresis*.

Fourthly, we obviously do not intend to suggest that this is the only nor the best possible model to account theologically of the Church, but simply that it provides a useful additional perspective that allows us to gain new insights into this complex reality. We are keenly aware that there are other 'equally viable models' of the Church and that these should not be viewed as 'being mutually exclusive', but rather as complementary.[453]

[453] See in this respect LaCugna and McDonnell, 'Returning from 'the Far Country": Theses for a Contemporary Trinitarian Theology', *SJT*, 41, 2, 1988, 204: 'against all protest, models are almost

Finally, giving due weight to the cautions of the three theologians whose positions on *perichoresis* we have discussed at the beginning of this chapter, our model will not advocate a direct transfer of the intratrinitarian relations into the realm of ecclesial relations. As we have already discussed, there is an essential difference between the spiritual dynamic at the level of the divine and that operating in the realm of created beings. Consequently, our study will not move from an analysis of Staniloae's theology of the Trinity directly into his ecclesiology. Rather, we will filter this transfer through his understanding of Christological anthropology.

Having formulated these disclaimers, we are now ready to move to a definition of what we mean by the perichoretic model as applied to ecclesiology.

4.3 The Meaning of the 'Perichoretic Model of the Church'

We have now come very close to the most important point in the first section of our work – the formulation of our ecclesiological model. Before doing that, however, we need to justify the use we will make in it of the concept of 'the Church as an icon of the Trinity'.

Before tracing the patristic origins of this concept, we need to clarify in what sense we are using here the concept of icon. Our starting point is Pelikan's definition. In his remarkable treatise *Vindication of Tradition*, the author contrasts three concepts: (1) *idol* – understood as 'the embodiment of that which it represents… [which] directs us to itself, rather than beyond itself'; (2) *token* (or sign) – meaning 'a purely arbitrary representation that does not embody what it represents', and (3) *icon* – understood as something that is not 'coextensive with the truth it teaches, but does present itself as the way that we … must follow if we are to go beyond it... a universal truth that is available only in a particular embodiment...'[454] It is in this particular sense that we are using the concept of icon as applied to the Church in the rest of our present work.

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inevitably understood non-metaphorically, taken to replicate in a precise way, rather than to imagine in a iconic manner. For this reason, equally viable models are viewed as being mutually exclusive'.

[454] J. Pelikan, *The Vindication of Tradition* (New Haven: YUP, 1984) 55–57.

As we have argued already, the patristic theme of Church as icon of the Trinity[455] has influenced in a major way Orthodox ecclesiologies. Hearne attributes to 'the great Orthodox tradition' the model of the church seen as an icon of the Trinity, a community defined in terms of perichoretic relationships.[456] But what do we mean when we describe the Church in this manner?[457]

Firstly, according to Cyril of Alexandria, the Church has a *mimetic* relationship with its archetype, the Holy Trinity. This means that the members of the Church are called to imitate in their createdness, in an iconic manner the relationships existing eternally between the divine persons.[458]

Secondly, we should add, following Maximus that in the unity of her members the Church must be an iconic representation of the prototype which is the unity between the divine *hypostases*.[459]

Commenting on John 17:21–23, particularly on the statement 'may they be one even as we are one', Kallistos argues that 'we humans, icons of the Trinity, are called to figure forth on earth the movement of God's *perichoresis*, reproducing here below the mutual love that passes unceasingly in heaven between Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This trinitarian *even as* is vital for our salvation'.[460]

The same author suggests that the presentation of the Church as icon of the Trinity argues for the application in the daily ecclesial life of the principle of unity in diversity, in which both personal identity of the members and their mutuality is

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[455] This theme was developed in the fifth century by Cyril of Alexandria and in the seventh century by Maximus, who declares that in developing this theme he follows an argument formulated before him by the Areopagite, whom he calls 'that blessed old man'.

[456] B. Hearne, 'The Church, the Icon of the Trinity' in P. Flanagan (ed.), *A New Missionary Era* (Maryknoll, N.Y.: Orbis, 1979) 55. The Catholic author contrasts this model of 'dancing together' with the classic pre Vatican II Catholic model of the church as hierarchy. The author, like others before him, wrongly attributes to 'some of the great Fathers' the faulty etymology of *perichoresis* as dance.

[457] This is precisely the question that C. Stamoulis aims to answer in his article '*Physis* and *Agape'*, 451, in which he uses this patristic theme as a source of suggestions for the contemporary ecumenical movement. In order to create a basis for the discussion, the author explains (p. 452): (1) that icons presuppose the existence of an archetype, to which they refer, and (2) that there are two types of icons: 'natural' (Christ and the Holy Spirit, who are icons of the Father as archetype) and 'created' (human beings created as icons of God, the archetype). Thus, the Church is a 'created' icon of the Trinity.

[458] Cyril of Alexandria, *The Commentary on the Gospel of St. John*, 17.20–21, *PG* 74, 556D–557A.

[459] Maximus the Confessor, *Mystagogia*, *PG* 91, 664D.

[460] Kallistos, 'Human Person', 17.

simultaneously preserved. Thus, 'the mutual indwelling of the persons of the Trinity is paralleled by the coinherence of the members of the Church'.[461]

This particular type of ecclesial unity, however, argues Zizioulas, should not be derived from sociology or ethics, but from faith.[462] By this, he means that we should not define ecclesial unity in sociological terms, and then project this image on the divine *koinonia*, but just the reverse: we should start with the data of faith, the revelation of the trinitarian God in the salvation history, and use this as a basis for our ecclesiology of communion.

Certainly, as we have already discussed at the beginning of this chapter, we cannot transfer things without certain mediation from the level of the divine into the created realm. Consequently, we can not expect the same kind or degree of unity in the prototype and in the icon. Thus, while the unity of the Godhead is one of concrete consubstantiality, which by definition manifests no discontinuity, the unity between human beings is discontinuous even in its initial created state (we may talk about a common 'human nature' only as an abstract concept). Following the fall, the discontinuity is even more intense.[463] Consequently, we need to view the iconic nature of the Church through the theological filter of the incarnation event.

Taking all this in consideration, we may conclude, with Behr, that the idea of the Church being an icon of the Trinity, as an aspect of the theological category of 'communion ecclesiology', means basically that 'the *koinonia* of the three persons of the Holy Trinity, the very being of God, is taken as a paradigm of the *koinonia* that constitutes the being of the ecclesial body, the Church'.[464] Therefore, to the question

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[461] Kallistos of Diokleia, *The Orthodox Church*, rev ed. (London: Penguin, 1993) 240.

[462] J. Zizioulas, 'The Church as Communion', *SVTQ*, 38, 1, 1994, 8.

[463] See on this Maximus the Confessor, *Letter to John Kouvikoularios, on love*, *PG* 91, 396D, where the patristic author argues that the devil deceived human beings, fragmented human nature and 'divided it into many opinions and imaginations'.

[464] Behr, 'Trinitarian Being', 67. The author explores under this rubric the ecumenical implications of the trinitarian basis of the Church. We find a similar argument in G. Lanenzakis, 'The Unity of the Church as Koinonia. Some Reflections from an Orthodox Standpoint', *The Ecumenical Review*, 45, Jan. 1993, 69–71. For a Protestant view on the same issue, see M. Haudel, 'The Relation between Trinity and Ecclesiology as an Ecumenical Challenge and its Consequences for the Understanding of Mission', *International Review of Missions*, 90, 359, 2001, 401–408. Finally, one can find a very interesting Pentecostal position on this topic in, Y.-G. Hong, 'Church and Mission: A Pentecostal Position', *International Review of Missions*, 90, 358, 2001, 289–308.

'why the Church' we may very well answer that she exists in order to be a living witness of the trinitarian love.[465]

Having said all this, we are ready now to give a concise but foundational formulation of the meaning of our 'perichoretic model of the Church', and to discuss a number of its implications.

***Being an icon of the Holy Trinity, the Church is called to reflect in her spatio-temporal reality, in Christ and through the power of the Holy Spirit, the dynamic relationships existing eternally between the divine persons, as described by the concept of trinitarian* perichoresis.**

Such a perspective on the Church brings with it a number of important implications. Firstly, being a reality in process, living between the times, the Church is not yet perfect – which precludes any form of docetic triumphalistic ecclesiology, arising from any kind of inappropriately over-realised eschatology. A perichoretic understanding of the Church leaves no room for idealistic illusions, but rather provides space for a thorough, candid and constructive analysis of the present state of the church.

Secondly, as an icon of the Trinity – one that contains the divine, without exhausting it – we can argue that the church is the only 'Christ' that humans will ever have access to on this side of eternity. This witness does not occur in separation from the Word, but rather through the living incarnation of the Word in the community of the faithful. Because of the perichoretic nature of the Church's relationship with the whole of creation, she is called to be the means for extending the implications of redemption over the entirety of created reality, as Paul argues in Book of Ephesians. Such a position charges the Church with an enormous responsibility. Thus, a Church that reflects in her dealings with the world, even if in a limited way, the perichoretic intratrinitarian dynamic cannot simply isolate herself from society and the surrounding reality. In fact, we may argue that her own salvation depends on her radical and redemptive involvement in bringing back to God, in Christ, the world that the triune God has created to reflect his glory (Eph. 1:10).

Thirdly, since in the Eastern Orthodox understanding of the Trinity we have both functional asymmetry (the Father is the 'source' of the Trinity; the Son obeys the

[465] R. T. Sears, 'Trinitarian Love as Ground for the Church' *Theological Studies*, 37, 4, 1976, 679.

Father and sends the Spirit, etc) and also ontological equality, a Church reflecting this model can be neither strictly and rigidly hierarchical, nor radically egalitarian. Moreover, such an understanding will exclude a view of the true Church as consisting merely of clergy, with the role of laity thereby reduced to the state of mere passive onlookers.

The rest of our study of Staniloae's theology will attempt, through paying particular attention to his ecclesiology, to reveal, with the use of our perichoretic model, the extent to which his theology meets these conditions. We will begin with a study of Staniloae's triadology. This will be followed by a concise analysis of his Christological anthropology and our analysis of his doctrine of the Church.

4.4 Conclusions

In this first part of our research, we have attempted to establish the methodological legitimacy of the use of the ancient concept of *perichoresis* as a starting point for the formulation of a theological model applied to ecclesiology.

We began our study with an analysis of the eclipse of religious symbolism in modernity. Rationalism attempted to undermine the power and legitimacy of religious symbols by denying their transcendental referent. Secularism aimed to establish a rational society, in which rational humanity who has 'come of age' relegates religious values and symbols to the private sphere, when they are not abandoned altogether. Nevertheless, the surprising resurgence of religion in recent decades has proven that the classic theories of secularization were utterly wrong. Religion appears to be as much an essential component of social life at the beginning of the third millennium as it always has been.

This recovery of religious consciousness brought with it a renewed interest in religious symbols, as well as in their linguistic counterpart, religious metaphors. We have showed that metaphors, religious or otherwise, are not disposable decorative devices but they can be viewed legitimately as indispensable heuristic tools in the elaboration of theological discourse. The theoretical constructs called 'models', as logical counterparts of metaphors, have shown their ability to offer new, surprising perspectives and redescriptions of various fields of study, from science through philosophy to theology.

We have chosen the patristic concept of *perichoresis* as a basis for a theological model that is intended to offer a new perspective on the doctrine of the Church. Following an in-depth analysis of the three meanings that this concept has taken in the history of Christian thought, we have come to the conclusion that trinitarian *perichoresis*, the interpenetration of the three divine persons in the Trinity, on the basis of their common *ousia*, is the uncontested meaning of this term. This is the basis on which we have constructed our theological model.

Finally, we have shown in the course of our work not only that the concept of trinitarian *perichoresis* is not outdated but that it has an impressive potential for offering fresh perspectives on complex theological realities, at the beginning of this twenty-first century. Consequently, we believe that the 'perichoretic model of the Church', that we have formulated on the basis of it, will prove extremely useful in revealing the degree of trinitarian consistency in Staniloae's ecclesiology.

PART II

PERICHORESIS AND THE IMMANENT TRINITY IN THE THEOLOGY OF STANILOAE

Motto: *The doctrine of the Trinity constitutes the foundation, infinite reservoir, power and model of our growing eternal communion.*[466]

[466] Staniloae, *EG, 1:*247.

5 Staniloae on The Mystery of the Trinity

5.1 The Renewal of Interest in the Trinity

While the doctrine of the Trinity played a central role during the patristic period, during the scholastic period it lost its crucial place and became the object of minute theological speculations rooted in the substantialism of the one divine subject, with very little connection to the history of salvation or consequently with the daily life of Christian believers. As Gunton writes, the matter became 'largely one of solving philosophical puzzles about the oneness and threeness of God, rather than of fundamental ontology'.[467] Yet the Trinity 'is not a puzzle to be solved or a question to be debated but our God to be enjoyed'.[468]

Ica suggests that the nadir of this 'forgetfulness' as far as the Trinity is concerned was reached at the time of the Enlightenment rationalism whose 'unitarian, antitrinitarian' inspiration is uncontested.[469] Those rationalistic times saw, in the west, an even lower level of interest in this doctrine than during the scholastic period. Thus, as is well known, Schleiermacher relegated the doctrine to an appendix of his systematic theology.[470] Later, what was for Schleiermacher a simple reticence 'became a positive virtue in the work of the influential voice of German liberalism, Albrecht Ritschl'.[471] Consequently, as Gunton rightly observes, 'while the theology and worship of Eastern Orthodoxy continue to be saturated with trinitarian categories, the doctrine of the Trinity has in the West come into increasing question'.[472]

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[467] Gunton, 'Augustine', 57. In context, the statement made by Gunton is an evaluation of Wolfson's understanding of the Trinity.

[468] S. H. Lancaster, "Divine Relations of the Trinity: Augustine's Answer to Arianism', *Calvin Theological Journal*, 34, 2, Nov. 1999, 346.

[469] I. I. Ica, *Mystagogia Trinitatis. Probleme ale teologiei patristice si moderne cu referire speciala la triadologia Sfintului Maxim Marturisitorul* (unpublished Ph.D. thesis, University of Cluj, 1998) 448.

[470] F. Schleiermacher, 'Conclusion. The Divine Trinity' in *The Christian Faith* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1989), 738–751.

[471] S. F. Grenz, *The Social God and the Relational Self. A Trinitarian Theology of the* Imago Dei (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2001) 25.

[472] Gunton, 'Augustine', 33.

The traditional Christian doctrine of the Trinity appeared to defy reason, the controlling concept of the age of the Enlightenment. In this unfavourable context, as Grenz suggests, 'the glaring exception to the nineteenth century dismissive attitude was G. W. F. Hegel. So important was Hegel's philosophical trinitarianism for subsequent developments that he is routinely ranked with Barth and Rahner as setting the parameters for the trinitarian thought that emerged in the twentieth century'.[473] Nevertheless, Hegel's philosophy was not only 'a tremendous effort for recovering the supreme significance of the Trinity as an ultimate mystery of existence', but, at the same time, an expression of 'secularization and of rational "suppression" of dogma'. It was also a 'reiteration of the aporia of Origenistic trinitarian theology', together with its inability to operate with clear distinctions and correlations between the immanent and the economic Trinity. Thus, 'the Trinity is dangerously reduced to the schematism of the dialectical self-becoming of the spirit'.[474]

After a long period of neglect of and decline in trinitarian thought, Barth has been the key catalyst for the contemporary renewal of interest in the doctrine of the Trinity.[475] Thus, as Pelikan writes, 'it was only during the middle third of the twentieth century, and that thanks in great measure to the theology of Barth, that trinitarian doctrine was restored to its place of honour within Protestant dogmatics'.[476]

The renewal of interest in the doctrine of the Trinity within Catholicism can also be traced to Barth, but more particularly to the influence of Rahner. He takes Barth's 'revelational trinitarianism'[477] one step further and, in his famous 'Rule', which

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[473] Grenz, *Social God*, 25–29. For a presentation of Hegel's philosophical theology and its influence on the development of theology in the twentieth century, this author suggests reading S. F. Grenz and R. E. Olson, *Twentieth Century Theology: God and the World in a Transitional Age* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 1992) 31–39.

[474] Ica, *Mystagogia*, 448–449.

[475] Among the reasons for this renewal, Thompson mentions (1) the ecumenical dialogue between the eastern and western churches; (2) 'the critique of scholasticism in favour of a new, dynamic understanding of the nature of the living God and the consequent theological task'; and (3) the acute awareness of the alienation of the individual, poverty and injustice in the modern world, which have led to the formulation of a 'trinitarian theology of the cross' – J. Thompson, *Modern Trinitarian Perspectives* (Oxford: OUP, 1994) v–vi.

[476] J. Pelikan, 'Foreword' in de Margerie, *Christian Trinity*, xi.

[477] Grenz, *Social God*, 34–38.

connects intimately the immanent and the economic Trinity,[478]offers to contemporary trinitarian theology a methodological principle, which, according to Kasper, 'reflects a broad consensus among the theologians of the various churches'.[479] It is very relevant for our previous discussion to mention Grenz's comment that Rahner develops his understanding of the Trinity in the context of his 'quarrel' with contemporary Catholic neo-scholasticism, more particularly with its insistence on keeping the traditional scholastic separation of 'God's threefold activity in history (the economic Trinity) from the threefoldness of God in eternity (the immanent Trinity)'.[480]

Not all scholars are so positive in their evaluation of contemporary trinitarianism. Thus, according to Ica,

> Western theology has attempted in our [twentieth] century, sometimes through dramatic, majestic efforts, to recover the existential and mere religious relevance of the trinitarian mystery. This time, however, the basis of all these projects was not static and abstract metaphysical essentialism, but a radical functional *oikonomism* and a consistent analogism. The fundamental philosophical weakness of this methodological option consists in a hasty confusion of ontology with metaphysics and of apophaticism with agnosticism. Being is reduced to becoming and knowledge to analogical speculation. This is why it is no surprise that in western theology today there is talk about the 'history of God', rather than the history of the world with God and why the discourse about divine transcendence has lost all possible credit. The forced application of anthropological analogies, both in a psychological and in a social sense, becomes obvious when they are used in order to conceive of the Trinity either as the triple means of self-relating of a unique divine Subject (in the vein of Barth and Rahner) or as a social community of three divine Subjects (following Gioacchino and Moltmann).[481]

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[478] Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1:291, n. 111, observes that 'the distinction between an economic and an essential Trinity goes back to an eighteenth century German theologian, J. Urlsperger' (in his works *Vier Versuche einer genaueren Bestimmung des Geheimnisses Gottes des Vaters und Christi* and *Kurzgefasstes System meines Vortrages von Gottes Dreieinigkeit*). Thus, as Groppe correctly concludes ('Catherine Mowry LaCugna's Contribution to Trinitarian Theology', *Theological Studies*, 63, Dec 2002, 731–732, n. 4), it is anachronistic to interpret patristic and medieval theology using terminology of the immanent and economic Trinity, although this is now standard practice'.

[479] W. Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ* (New York, NY: Crossroad, 1982) 274.

[480] Grenz, *Social God*, 39. We will return to this topic further in the course of this chapter.

[481] Ica, *Mystagogia*, 449.

The same author argues that there are 'three axiomatic principles' which underlie the contemporary western renewal of trinitarianism: (1) 'trinitarian doctrine has to be rooted in the economy of the Paschal mystery of the cross and of the resurrection of Christ (the Rahner axiom)'; (2) 'God's nature has to be redefined in a relational (anti-metaphysical) manner'; and (3) 'in the light of the Paschal economy, the metaphysical axiom of God's impassibility has to be revised: God suffers and is subjected to becoming ("*Gottes Sein ist in Werden*", the Jüngel axiom)'. This 'abandonment of metaphysics as abstract philosophical speculation in favour of biblicism and a narrative historicism', he believes, subjects eastern trinitarian patristic thinking to a severe pressure and 'aggressive and reductionistic interpretation'. As a result, some orthodox theologians, such as Zizioulas and Yannaras, are tempted to 'revise and rewrite the eastern patristic thinking in a radically personalist and metaphysical manner'. Under the same pressure, others, such as Bulgakov, propose alternative trinitarian schemas, in an effort to bridge the gap between *theologia* and *oikonomia*. Lossky and Staniloae, argues Ica, are 'notable exceptions' to these revisionist tendencies. This is so because 'they are the only ones who have grasped the profound ontological character of patristic thinking and have developed the exact sense of trinitarian apophaticism, precisely because their starting point was the vital connection between dogma, mystical life and liturgy'.[482] Although this interesting analysis has much in its favour, its apologetic and somewhat reductionistic character is patent. In reality, as we shall see later in our study, whilst Ica's criticism is correct as far as much of western trinitarianism is concerned, there are indeed notable exceptions.[483] At the same time, even if we may formulate various criticisms of Zizioulas's creative reinterpretation of patristic thinking,[484] we doubt there is any warrant for charging him with an attempt to deontologise the Trinity.

Reverting to Barth, we observe that beginning with a presentation of God as triune reality, his *Church Dogmatics* is built on a consistently trinitarian structure[485]. The same is true about the underlying structure of Staniloae's *Dogmatics*. Moreover, both theologians have the merit of starting their trinitarian endeavour with a discussion

[482] Ica, *Mystagogia*, 450–452.

[483] Torrance, Gunton and Congar are only a few examples.

[484] See, for instance, L. Turcescu, '"Person" versus "Individual" and other Modern Misreadings of Gregory of Nyssa', *Modern Theology*, 18, 4, Oct. 2002, 527–539.

[485] Olson and Hall, *Trinity*, 96.

on revelation[486] and submitting all relevant philosophical considerations to the light of the economy of salvation as unfolded in the Holy Scriptures. Finally, their approach is primarily doxological,[487] the theological endeavour being subordinated to the higher purpose of enriching the experience of God in the worshipping community. In passing, we may rightly observe, with LaCugna, that 'all great trinitarian theologians have been contemplatives'.[488] In this respect, both theologians anticipate developments that, as we will argue later, became noticeable in trinitarian theology only in the last decades of the twentieth century.

The doctrines of the Trinity and of Christology form the cornerstone of the theological system formulated by Dumitru Staniloae[489]. This is not surprising, given the neo-patristic character of Staniloae's theology.[490] Moreover, the theological efforts of the Church Fathers and the decisions of the first seven ecumenical councils were dominated by Christological and trinitarian concerns.

In order to be able to comprehend and evaluate the trinitarian ecclesiology of Staniloae, we need to firstly clarify his understanding of the Trinity in light of contemporary trinitarian debates.

5.2 Approach and Basic Premises in Staniloae's Triadology

When we speak about the Trinity we are dealing with one of the most profound mysteries ever encountered by the human mind. It defies all human comprehension and imagination, but it is at the same time unavoidable, in view of the fact that the whole of

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[486] See Thompson, *Modern Trinitarian Perspectives*, 7.

[487] For Staniloae, 'theology… is doxological; its symbolic language evokes the language of prayer. It is an intellectual liturgy centred on the revelation of the Holy Trinity' – I. Bria, 'The Creative Vision of D. Staniloae. An Introduction to His Theological; Thought', *The Ecumenical Review*, 33, 1, 1981, 55. On the necessarily doxological character of the trinitarian dogma, see also LaCugna and McDonnell, 'Returning from "the Far Country"', 196–200.

[488] LaCugna, 'Re-conceiving the Trinity', 17.

[489] Although the trinitarian basis of Staniloae's theology is an undeniable fact, with the exception of his *Dogmatic Theology*, he did not publish any other in-depth systematic presentation of the doctrine of Trinity. He has discussed its different aspects in eight articles, published between 1964 and 1991, after he was freed from his imprisonment. In 1993, the year of his death, he published a monograph entitled *Sfinta Treime sau La inceput a fost iubirea* (Bucuresti: EIBMBOR, 1993) in which he simply reiterates the ideas formulated in his *Dogmatic Theology*.

[490] See K. Ware, 'Foreword', *EG* 1, ix and also A. Louth, 'Review Essay: The Orthodox Dogmatic Theology of Dumitru Staniloae', *Modern Theology*, 13, 2, 1997, 256. These authors describe Staniloae's dogmatic work as a 'neo-patristic synthesis', a phrase coined by Georges Florovsky.

reality is rooted in this mystery. Augustine articulates well this paradoxical truth when he says: 'anyone who denies the Trinity is in danger of losing her salvation, but anyone who tries to understand the Trinity is in danger of losing her mind'.[491]

The space available does not allow us to present a history of the doctrine of the Trinity, nor is it necessary, as there are many excellent historical presentations available.[492] For the same reason, we will not provide a general overview of the contemporary trinitarian developments,[493] but will only comment on some of them to the extent that they are relevant for our presentation of Staniloae's triadology.[494]

Following the eastern patristic tradition, Staniloae makes an obvious effort to avoid rational speculation about the internal dynamics of the Trinity, particularly in areas where special revelation does not have anything to say,[495] as he believes to be the case for instance with the procession of the Spirit from the Father and the Son. Thus, says Staniloae, 'The Fathers intended to emphasize that the procession of the Spirit from the Father is something different from the begetting of the Son, but they refused to specify what this difference consists of'.[496] In areas such as this one we have to 'simply accept the three divine persons' and not to 'try to explain their origin according to the analogy of the functions of the soul', as is done in Catholic theology.[497]

Augustine is the origin of the 'outrageous claim' as Gunton describes it, that there is a crucial analogy between the inner being of God and the structure of the human

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[491] R. E. Olson and C. A. Hall, *The Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2002) 1.

[492] We may mention just two examples: the magisterial synthesis of de Margerie – *The Christian Trinity in History* (Still River, Maine: St. Bede's, 1982) – formulated from a Catholic perspective, and also one more introductory overview, *The Trinity* by Olson and Hall, formulated from an Evangelical perspective. No such Orthodox synthesis exists yet in English.

[493] Among the many relevant works we may mention just two very important ones: C. E. Gunton, *The Promise of Trinitarian Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1991) and J. Thompson, *Modern Trinitarian Perspectives* (Oxford: OUP, 1994).

[494] For a quasi-complete bibliography of Staniloae, see V. Popa, *Parintele Dumitru Staniloae. Bio-bibliografie* (Iasi: Trinitas, 2004).

[495] This reserved attitude towards a speculative approach to trinitarianism should not be confused with the somewhat similar attitude of many theologians in the Anabaptist tradition, who have regarded the patristic efforts at dogmatic clarification as 'wasted effort in comparison with the much more important task of evangelism and discipleship'. In the case of Staniloae we have to do with a mystical refusal of rationalisation, while for the Anabaptists the issue was one of a specific ecclesiological strategy and of a particular hermeneutical choice – in the words of Menno Simmons, to 'speak where Scripture speaks and remain silent where Scripture remains silent' – Olson and Hall, Trinity, 72–74.

[496] Staniloae, *Sfinta Treime*, 69.

[497] Staniloae, *EG, 1:*275.

mind and that this, rather than the economy of salvation, provides the right means of access to divine ontology.

> According to such a doctrine, the human mind is constituted in a threefold way because it contains, first, as its hidden storehouse, the memory of the form which, according to classic Platonist theory, it brings into the world from eternity but forgets by virtue of its embodied state; second, the so to speak mental screen on which the contents of its store can be actualised; and third the power by means of which the content is brought to actuality.[498]

According to Staniloae, the psychological analogy leads to serious insufficiencies in the Catholic doctrine of the Trinity. Firstly, 'the Father, seen as a model of human existence, receives an immeasurable ontological superiority compared to the other [divine] persons, seen as models of the psychological functions of human existence'. This, in turn, leads to 'not only ontological inequality, but also ontological difference' between the divine persons. Thirdly, if we start from the analogy with the psychological functions, it is difficult to understand whether the Son and the Spirit represent 'either the intelligence and the will, or their products: the Word and Love', since Thomism affirms now one and now the other.[499] We have brought this topic in the discussion at this point simply in order to illustrate Staniloae's approach; we will return to the debate later.

5.2.1 A Dialogical/Polemic Stance

As we can clearly observe, Staniloae develops his trinitarian system in a polemical manner, primarily against the background of the psychological model of the Trinity formulated by Augustine and developed by Aquinas, but at times also in contradiction to certain Protestant approaches to trinitarianism. Staniloae appears to treat non-Orthodox perspectives unjustly and sometimes even to misrepresent or caricature them.[500] Thus, according to Roberson, 'it is clear that he has not made a profound study

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[498] Gunton, 'Augustine', 48–49.

[499] Staniloae, 'Studii catolice recente despre *filioque*', *ST*, 25, 7–8, 1973, 486. What Augustine is essentially doing is to substitute the 'inner structure of the mind' as an analogy of 'the inner being of God' for the economy of salvation as the source for his doctrine of the Trinity – Gunton, *Promise*, 45.

[500] Thus, Staniloae writes at one point that 'Protestantism, for which spirituality is of lesser value, has no longer understood the supernatural acts in the life of Christ and has declared them mythological. This has led logically to the need to demythologise' – *EG*, 1:25. This sweeping statement about Protestant spirituality is not only unjust and untrue when applied to this tradition as a whole but also equates it with

of the currents of thought of Catholic and Reformation theology, although he has a professional knowledge of these movements. His remarks concerning Catholic theology are often superficial, and seem to manifest a closed attitude towards the problem of [the] legitimacy of pluralism in theology'.[501] Similarly, Bartos believes that, even if some of his criticism of Western theology is warranted, 'a more sustained treatment of the debate between modern thinkers and those of a more traditional school would bring his own position into focus'.[502] Nevertheless, the dialogical nature of Staniloae's treatment of the doctrine of the Trinity is highly commendable and it compels us to analyse his thinking on the Trinity in the context of contemporary trinitarianism.

According to Tanner, there are three possible ways of conceiving of the divine unity: the first is to talk about it 'in terms of a unity of essence or substance'; the second is to describe it 'in terms of co-inherence of substance and persons'; the third is to depict it 'in terms of indivisibility in action'.[503] Of these, Staniloae shows a marked preference for the second, and, to a certain extent the third, while clearly rejecting the first approach as a starting point for discussion.

5.2.2 A 'Personalist' Perspective[504]

The basic premise of Staniloae's comparative treatment of the doctrine of Trinity is the idea that, while western theology, following Augustine,[505] has as its starting point the

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an outdated minority (Bultmannian) view of spirituality. It is because of such unfair judgements that Louth, an Anglican convert to Orthodoxy, points out that Staniloae's attitude to western theology 'is negative, even uncomprehending' and concludes that 'there is… little real engagement with western theology in Fr. Staniloae's dogmatics, although there is a readiness to point out its deficiencies' – 'Review Article', 260–261.

[501] Roberson, *CROE,* 15.

[502] Bartos, *DEOT,* 336.

[503] K. Tanner, *Jesus, Humanity and the Trinity. A Brief Systematic Theology* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2001), 38.

[504] We use here the term 'personalist' not in the philosophical sense, although this is true for Staniloae also, but in the sense of a trinitarianism rooted in the concept of 'person'.

[505] See on this Gunton, *Promise*, 38–42. Also, on p. 53, Gunton states explicitly that Augustine failed adequately to understand the trinitarian achievement of the Cappadocians. In another text he describes this in the following manner: 'God is as he is made known by the Son and the Spirit: he is outer –distinct – in person, to be sure, but not in being as God, for he is made known as *he* is' – Gunton, 'Augustine', 58. Cary, however, disagrees with Gunton and argues that in fact Augustine builds on the Cappadocians' position rather than departing from it: 'Augustine', he says, 'begins where the Cappadocians leave off: accepting their answer to the question "why not three gods?" he proceeds to ask "three *what*?"… Augustine never uses the divine essence *per se* as his starting point' – P. Cary, 'Historical Perspectives on Trinitarian Doctrine', *Religious and Theological Studies Bulletin*, Nov–Dec 1995, 3, as quoted in Olson

concept of *ousia* and deducing from it the divine persons, eastern Orthodox theology, following the Cappadocians, begins with the concept of *hypostasis* or *persona*, in order to derive from it an understanding of the divine being. This analysis of the difference of trinitarian perspectives between the east and the west is not uniquely Orthodox, as it is also shared by the certain Catholic theologians such as de Régnon[506] and Rahner.[507] On the Protestant side, although Pannenberg expresses reservations in terms of deriving the divine tri-unity from the person of the Father, he is even more strongly opposed to deriving the persons of the Trinity from the unity of the divine substance. Thus he writes that 'any derivation of the plurality of trinitarian persons from the essence of the one God, whether it be viewed as spirit or love, leads into the problems of either modalism on the one hand or subbordinationism on the other'.[508]

Likewise, Gunton summarises Augustine's position in the following manner: 'it is the divine substance and not the Father that is the basis of the being of God, and therefore, *a fortiori*, of everything else'. Gunton believes that this matter of derivation is of crucial importance because: (1) 'if something other than the Father is the ontological foundation for the being of God, the world and everything in it derives from what is fundamentally impersonal', and (2) 'a doctrine of God as essentially and in all senses unknown is the inevitable result [of such a position]'.[509]

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and Hall, *Trinity*, 45. We consider that Cary's conclusion is at best an overstatement and that it goes against the consensus of a large majority of Augustine exegetes, including those in the Catholic tradition. Augustine never interacts explicitly with the Cappadocians, except perhaps at the level of terminology.

[506] T. de Régnon, *Etudes de théologie positive sur la Sainte Trinité* (Paris, 1898). Thus, de Régnon declares (1:433): 'Latin philosophy envisages first the nature in itself and proceeds to the expression; Greek philosophy envisages first the expression and then penetrates it to find the nature. The Latin considers personality as a mode of nature; the Greek considers nature as the content of the person'. In referring to de Régnon's analysis of this difference, de Margerie qualifies it as simply 'consecrated reductionistic clichés' – Margerie, *Christian Trinity*, 162. On the other hand, Congar evaluates de Régnon's position more positively. Thus, he considers that 'we owe a great deal to this scholar who came to the extremely valuable conclusion that the dogmatic structures of the east and the west are different, but express the same intention of faith', in spite of the fact that 'he simplified the differences between the theologies', and that his valuable insights 'have been further simplified and hardened [by Orthodox theologians] to the point of becoming misleading caricatures' – Y. Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* (New York: Crossroad, 1997), 3:xvi–xvii..

[507] K. Rahner, *The Trinity* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970) 15–21. In fact, the author does not mention de Régnon explicitly in this context, but protests against the artificial separation and the strict sequence between what he calls 'the two treatises *On the One God* and *On the Triune God*', in Catholic theology, which leads among other things to the giving of precedence to the divine *ousia* over the divine *hypostases*.

[508] Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1:298–299.

[509] Gunton, 'Augustine', 57.

Staniloae believes that one possible explanation of the generic difference between east and west consists in the fact that the central concern of the Latin Fathers was that of counteracting Gnostic and Arian subordinationism, by demonstrating the essential equality of the divine persons as a basis for the divinity of Christ and of the Spirit. However, Staniloae suggests that the way they countered these heresies made them incline towards modalism.[510]

Alternatively, the eastern Fathers, particularly the Cappadocians, were reacting against Eunomianism, which postulated that a multiplicity within the Godhead is possible only as subordinate participation. This led the Fathers of the eastern Church to strongly affirm a *theologia* of tri-unity, distinct from any procession of the divine essence, which Staniloae calls 'the major obsession of Catholic theology'.[511] Nevertheless, Staniloae fails to point out that this emphasis on multiplicity exposed some of the eastern Fathers to the parallel danger of being accused, legitimately or not, of tri-theism.[512]

Eastern Orthodox theologians unanimously agree that the divine persons *are* the divine essence, or, in other words, that the divine essence exists only as persons.[513], Thus, they argue that a theology which takes the divine essence as its starting point runs the risk of leading to a sort of 'reification' of the Godhead, to an impersonal and substantialist understanding of *theologia*, and consequently to an institutional ecclesiology. Alternatively, if one begins with the patristic concept of person, this leads to a personalist theology and to a communitarian ecclesiology. We would like to argue that this 'black and white' line of argument overly simplifies matters and does insufficient justice to the complexity of the issues involved. However it reproduces quite well the starting point for the definition of the Trinity in these two traditions, and particularly for the basic approach taken on this matter by Staniloae.

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[510] Staniloae, 'Studii catolice', 475.

[511] Staniloae, 'Studii catolice', 473–474.

[512] See, B. Studer, 'Trithéisme', in A. Di Berardino, *Dictionnaire encyclopédique du Christianisme ancien* (Paris: Cerf, 1990) 2:2490.

[513] Basil the Great firmly rejects the theory formulated by Paul of Samosata, according to which the divine being is the source of the *hypostases*. Staniloae considers that Basil demonstrated convincingly that the divine being does not pre-date the persons, nor *vice versa*. 'For as being cannot exist but in the persons, in the same manner, the persons are but modes of subsistence of being' – Staniloae, 'Fiinta si ipostasurile', 57.

Staniloae does not appear to be aware of the fact that in recent decades Catholic theologians have become conscious of the hazards to which a divine ontology that begins with the concept of *ousia*, rather than that of person, lays itself open. Thus, LaCugna, opting in favour of the eastern approach, argues that giving priority to person over being has at least two important consequences: Firstly, 'God's ultimate reality cannot be located in *substance* (what it is in itself) but only in *personhood*: what God is toward another', and secondly, 'love is constitutive of God's being, but as a predicate of person, not substance'.[514]

De Margerie[515] also admits that Augustine's statement that 'the deity that unites them [Father and Son] would be the Holy Spirit' sounds 'awkward' for the contemporary reader whose understanding has been influenced by the personalist themes that have dominated much of the European thinking in the twentieth century. Therefore, 'it is as person, not by the simple possession of the common divine nature that the Spirit is the bond between the Father and the Son'.[516] Nevertheless, it would be difficult to argue that the majority of other Catholic theologians share this awareness.

5.2.3 An Apophatic Approach

The purpose of the present chapter is to unfold Staniloae's understanding of the Trinity as a mystery. Yet, given the author's dialogical, if not polemical approach to the issue, we will have to make constant reference to the western, either Catholic or Protestant perspectives on the matters we discuss. We agree with Congar that in order to be able to do this correctly we need to understand both the internal logic of these differing theologies and the concrete content of their attempts made to deal with the specific theological challenges in their particular contexts and to negotiate an overcoming of the differences that exist between them.[517]

A superficial examination of the structure of Staniloae's *Dogmatic Theology* may leave us with the impression that he follows the classic procedure of High Scholasticism in beginning with the being of God and his attributes and deducing from

[514] C. M. LaCugna, *God for Us*, 260–261.

[515] Augustine, *De fide et symbolo*, IX, 19, *ML* 40, 191.

[516] Margerie, *Christian Trinity*, 112,

[517] Congar, *Holy Spirit*, 3:xvii–xviii.

this the persons of the Trinity. Indeed, after dealing with the issues of revelation and the knowledge of God, Staniloae treats the being and the super-essential attributes of God in chapters seven and eight of the first volume of his work. His teaching on the Holy Trinity is developed only in chapter ten. However, this is only the appearance of things and may simply be an unintentional result of his following the basic structure of the earlier dogmatic work of the Orthodox theologian Andrutsos, which Staniloae had translated in 1930.[518]

Even such an astute analyst as Pannenberg was misled by this circumstance.[519] From the structure of the *Dogmatics*, he inferred that Staniloae was deducing the persons of the Trinity from the nature and attributes of God. In fact exactly the opposite is the case as the quotations we present later in this chapter will establish. It is true that Pannenberg may not be comfortable with the degree of emphasis that Staniloae lays on the monarchy of the Father as source of divinity. Yet, the priority that Staniloae gives to the revelation of salvation history (not to revelation as self-revelation, as in Barth) in the building up of his case for trinitarianism would lead him to agree with Pannenberg when he argues that 'to find a basis for the doctrine of the Trinity we must begin with the way in which Father, Son and Spirit come on the scene and relate to one another in the event of revelation'.[520]

Andrutsos was a classic representative of the scholastic school in Greek Orthodox theology. The aridity of this approach almost made Staniloae give up his theological studies.[521] Nevertheless, later, after his contact with the works of Gregory Palamas, Staniloae became one of the most illustrious promoters of the mystical neo-Palamite direction in Orthodox theology pioneered by such members of the Russian Orthodox Diaspora, as Florovsky,[522] Lossky[523] and Evdokimov[524]. In fact, Staniloae

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[518] H. Andrutsos, *Dogmatica Bisericii Ortodoxe Rasaritene* (Sibiu: Editura Tipografiei Arhidiecezane, 1930).

[519] W. Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 3 vols. (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988, 1991 and 1993) 1:281.

[520] Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1:299.

[521] After his first year of study at the Theology Faculty in Cernauti, Staniloae left and registered at the Faculty of Humanities in Bucharest. It was only after a providential meeting with Metropolitan Nicolae Balan that Staniloae returned to his theological studies. See M. Pacurariu, 'Preotul profesor si academician Dumitru Staniloae. Cateva coordonate biografice', in Ica (ed.), *PC*, 3.

[522] G. Florovsky, *Collected Works*, 14 vols. (Vaduz: Büchervertriebsanstalt, 1987).

[523] V. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (London: Clarke, 1957).

introduces his trinitarian concept of God as 'supreme personal reality'[525] in the first chapter of his *Dogmatics* and consistently he builds his theological system on this foundation.

In his treatment of the Trinity Staniloae attempts to do justice to the complex and paradoxical nature of the doctrine under scrutiny. Thus he begins one of his articles on this theme with the statement: 'God in himself is a mystery. Of his inner existence nothing can be said'.[526] Later on, in his *Dogmatics*, he develops the same idea in the following manner:

> We must not imagine that we have completely understood the reality of the Trinity. This is to remain at the level of our understanding and the Trinity then becomes an idol for us, halting the movement of our spirit towards that mystery of the plenitude of life which transcends understanding.[527]

Yet, this does not mean, he contends, that all theological approaches to the Trinity are illegitimate. Negrut[528] is right when he argues that Staniloae is very careful to reject any form of 'total apophaticism', such as that exemplified in the theology of Lossky.[529] His apophatic understanding is expressed clearly in statements such as that in which he argues that 'the only way which is fitting in regard to God is the second [*via negativa*] which leads us finally to total ignorance'.[530] In opposition to this, Staniloae believes that we should not let ourselves 'sink down into the world of the undefined',

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[524] P. Evdokimov, *L'Ortodoxie* (Neuchâtel: Delachaux and Niestlé, 1959).

[525] Staniloae, *EG*, 1:9. A remarkable thesis has been written on this topic by a Romanian Evangelical theologian, arguing that this concept could very well be a key for unfolding Staniloae's theological system – Rogobete, *Ontologie*.

[526] D. Staniloae 'Sfinta Treime, structura supremei iubiri', *ST*, 22, 1970, 333 (English version, published in Staniloae, *TC*, 73–108, anticipates the full treatment of the topic in his *Dogmatic Theology* (1978).

[527] Staniloae, *EG, 1:*246.

[528] P. Negrut, *The Development of the Concept of Authority within the Orthodox Church during the Twentieth Century* (London: LBC, 1994, unpublished Ph.D. thesis) 28–37. Adaptations of part one and four of this thesis were published as P. Negrut, *Revelatie, Scriptura, Comuniune. O interogatie asupra autoritatii in cunoasterea teologica* (Oradea: Cartea crestina, 1996) and P. Negrut, *Biserica si Statul. O interogatie asupra modelului 'simfoniei' bizantine* (Oradea: Editura Institutului Biblic 'Emanuel', 2000).

[529] Harrison explains that Lossky resorted to this approach because of a specific historical context, dominated by the 'over-systematisation and over-dogmatisation' of neo-Thomism. Thus, 'in order to break through the constraints of such philosophically based dogmatism, Lossky emphasised the apophatic dimension of Orthodox theology' – V. Harrison, 'The Relationship between Apophatic and Kataphatic Theology', *Pro Ecclesia*, 4, 3, 1995, 319–320.

[530] V. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (Crestwood NY: SVSP, 1973), p. 25. His views are based on what Staniloae considers to be an incorrect interpretation of Dionysius the Areopagite.

since the result of such an approach would be 'an impersonal or unipersonal god who does not possess the spirit of communion within himself, and hence is neither apt for, nor disposed towards communion with created persons'.[531] Moreover, as Harrison rightly points out, the cataphatic dimension of Christian theology needs to be reaffirmed even more emphatically in the present theological context, when many are 'compromising, undercutting or abandoning doctrinal affirmations which the Church regards as indispensable to authentic Christian identity'.[532]

Indeed, we would not be able to understand the transcendent God if he did not reveal himself to us through creation, providence and his work of salvation. Thus, we can use true words to speak about God, the Truth. Nevertheless, our words will not be able to 'contain him completely', as they are not the Truth itself. Thus,

> our words and thoughts of God are both cataphatic and apophatic, that is, they say something and yet at the same time they suggest the ineffable. If we remain enclosed within our formulae they become our idols; if we reject any and every formula we drown in the undefined chaos of that ocean. Our words and thoughts are a finite opening towards the infinite, transparencies for the infinite, and so they are able to foster within us life that is spiritual.[533]

The Old Testament reveals to us the God of Israel, who is One. The emphasis there, argues Staniloae, is on the transcendence of God. The revelation of God as Trinity is made clear only in the new dispensation, through the person of Christ, in whom God identified himself with us in such a manner that he could also, in a mysterious way, preserve his transcendence. In Christ, God is 'revealed to us as an economic Trinity'.[534] Let us turn now to the way in which creation reflects the fact that it has its source in the divine Trinity.

5.3 Reflections of the Trinity in Creation

Since without revelation we cannot even begin to penetrate the mystery that surrounds the divine, Staniloae believes that the analogy of nature, in its material and human form,

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[531] Staniloae, *EG, 1:*246.

[532] Harrison, 'Relationship', 320.

[533] Staniloae, 'Sfinta Treime, structura', 73.

[534] Staniloae, 'Sfinta Treime, structura', 75.

is an invaluable help in understanding intra-trinitarian relations. This reasoning leads him at this point to a sort of approach 'from below' in the understanding of the Trinity.

The space available here does not allow us to enlarge upon the Orthodox theology of creation.[535] Yet we need to underline that the doctrine of creation traditionally plays a much more important role in Orthodox theology that in western theology in general. It is also more holistically integrated in the theological fabric of Orthodoxy. The main reason for this is an emphasis on the goodness of creation and its potential to be deified (i.e. made able to participate in the divine, without the obliteration of the distinction between the Creator and the created) rather than on its fallenness and corruption. Obviously, these two emphases produce quite different theologies of creation, as well as different emphases in the understanding of God's relation to creation. Thus, Horhoianu writes:

> Eastern Orthodoxy calls God the 'Proniator' [Providence, from the Gr. πρόνοια, providence, foresight, provision] and not the Almighty as in western Christianity. The western term almighty means God's ability to work also against creation, not in order to destroy it, but to limit and dominate it, so that it permanently has the consciousness of its powerlessness. In the east, divine allpowerfulness is the source of the creature's deification, that is, for it being endowed with divine power according to grace, not according to nature. The west understands allpowerfulness as God's ability to oppose the created order, while in the east allpowerfulness is the glory of God that perfects and deifies the created world, introducing it into full graceful loving communion with himself.[536]

In the same vein, for Staniloae 'the world was created by God as a gift for the human person'.[537] Miller describes this understanding of creation and created existence as the primordial gift of God as 'a pervasive theme which, while deeply rooted in Staniloae's dogmatic and systematic treatments, lies beneath them like a persistent, rich melodic line'. He believe that this theme 'connects too with Staniloae's own sensibilities and acts as a key point of contact with his ascetical, sacramental and – for

[535] For an analysis of Staniloae's theology of the world see M. Bielawski, *The Philocalical Vision of the World in the Theology of Dumitru Staniloae* (Bydgoszcz, 1997) and C. Miller, *The Gift of the World. An Introduction to the Theology of Dumitru Staniloae* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000).

[536] Horhoianu, 100–101. Although the author makes his point somewhat forcefully and polemically, this quote reflects well the differing perceptions of this issue in the east compared with the west.

[537] Staniloae, *EG*, 2:21.

lack of a better word – existential concerns'.[538] Bielawski calls this a 'philocalical vision of the world', because 'the main sources of inspirations and arguments in his reflection' are the writings of the Church Fathers assembled in the famous Orthodox collection called *Philocalia*. Bielawski also suggests that 'the most characteristic theological attitude of Staniloae is the conviction that it is the direct, mystic and apophatic experience of God which influences or even changes the human vision and understanding of the world'.[539]

Staniloae resists the temptation to start his reflections on the Trinity with speculations on the inner dynamics of the immanent Trinity, which still characterise much of present day trinitarianism. In fact, LaCugna may be right when she suggests that this may be the reason why the ordinary Christian so often fails to understand or to grasp the relevance of trinitarian teaching.[540]

This situation has prompted a number of theologians to look for new ways of conceiving of the Trinity, by revising the classical trinitarian analogies. Thus, says LaCugna, some theologians have attempted to 'construct new models of trinitarian relations: interpersonal (H. Mühlen); society of persons (J. Bracken); processive relations of divine becoming (L. Ford); temporal unsurpassibility (R. Jenson); semiotic relations (G. Tavard); eschatological consummation (J. Moltmann)'.[541] These new approaches have indeed the merit of reframing the discussion in ways easier to comprehend in contemporary contexts. In spite of this, however, trinitarian thought still remains 'an intellectual conundrum more than an articulation of ordinary human experience', in which the starting point and focus is still on the immanent trinity.[542] Yet, arguably, there is a better approach, that of re-conceiving the Trinity as a mystery of salvation, which is at the same time both Christological and doxological in its nature.

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[538] C. Miller, *The Gift of the World. An Introduction to the Theology of Dumitru Staniloae* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 2000) 3 – this is one of the first western monographs on Staniloae, that 'fills a serious gap', as McPartlan notes on the dust jacket.

[539] Bielawski, *Philocalical Vision,* 203–204.

[540] C. M. LaCugna, 'Re-conceiving the Trinity', 1.

[541] LaCugna, 'Re-conceiving the Trinity', 1. See also LaCugna, 'Problems with a Trinitarian Formulation', *Louvain Studies*, 10, 4, 1985, 326.

[542] C. M. LaCugna, 'Problems', 326.

Unlike Barth, whose trinitarian theology was still characterised by 'fixation on the divine subject',[543] but building on his methodological approach, Moltmann constructs his 'trinitarian eschatological panentheism'[544] as a 'historicizing of Barth's suggestion that the Christ event is constitutive of the divine life in all eternity'.[545] His emphasis is clearly on the economic dynamics of the three-personed God. Thus, he allows space for the question of the divine unity only after he has dealt with the question of the communion within the plurality of the divine persons. He goes as far as to suggest that Christianity should not be described as monotheistic at all, at least in the strict sense of the term.[546] According to Peters, with Moltmann we get 'perhaps the biggest step yet away from the substantialist unity of God toward a relational unity in which the divine threeness is given priority'.[547]

In a somewhat similar manner, Staniloae's starting point is the revelation of the trinitarian God in the person of Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit in the economy of salvation.[548] Such an approach is much more conducive to a reverent formulation and application of trinitarian thought, which is so important for his theology.

5.3.1 Unity in Diversity. The Paradoxical Nature of the World

The Christian doctrine of the One God existing eternally in three equally divine persons has always been a challenge to reason. The history of dogma is full of sincere, but unsuccessful attempts to solve this apparent contradiction in a rational manner. However, this is not the only paradox that reason encounters in its attempt to make

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[543] Grenz, *Social God*, 41–42.

[544] See R. Bauckham, *The Theology of Jürgen Moltmann* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1995) 17. Moltmann himself uses the phrase 'trinitarian panentheism' in his book *God in Creation. A New Theology of Creation and the Spirit of God* (San Francisco: Harper and Row, 1985) 98. 'Panentheism', a term coined by K. C. F. Krause, could be defined as 'the view that God is in all things', and which also 'sees the world and God as mutually dependent for their fulfilment' – D. K. McKim, 'panentheism' in *Westminster Dictionary of Theological Terms* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1996) 199. This does not mean however that for Moltmann God and the world are interdependent; rather, for him creation is an act of self-limitation, rooted in God's loving nature. This theological system is described as 'eschatological', because for Moltmann the perfect divine unity is to be expected in the future, at the consummation of history.

[545] Grenz, *Social God*, 41.

[546] Moltmann, *The Trinity and the Kingdom. The Doctrine of God* (Minneapolis, Minn.: Fortress, 1993) 129–137.

[547] T. Peters, *God as Trinity. Relationality and Temporality in the Divine Life* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox, 1993) 103.

[548] Staniloae, *EG*, ch. 1 and 2, 1:1–36.

sense of the reality surrounding us. In the physical realm, the dual nature of light and other similar phenomena have puzzled scientists just as the doctrine of Trinity has presented a conundrum to theologians.

Today, as we witness the decline of rationalism, an increasing number of people are accepting the idea of the paradoxical nature of reality. It is not only that the holding of apparently contradictory assertions is no longer considered as being necessarily irrational, but also, as says Staniloae, that they 'are now recognised as indications of a natural stage towards which reason must strive', which the author describes as 'the antinomic model of being'.[549]

According to this, plurality is no longer considered as necessarily being a threat to unity. It is generally accepted now that, certain conditions being met, plurality maintains unity and unity maintains plurality. This perspective provides a far superior comprehension of reality to that given by the classic categorical logic of rationalism.

Moreover, Staniloae argues that a strong case may be presented for a trinitarian nature of the whole of reality, which is not surprising if the Orthodox understanding of the world as a reflection of the Trinity is correct. Obviously, because of Adam's sin, the initial structure of the Cosmos is under the curse and is shattered, though not totally obliterated. This is why creation, including humanity, continues to reflect, even if imperfectly, its Creator. 'Today', says Staniloae, 'many see the plurality of the entire creation as something made specific in all manner of trinities. Bernhard Philberth, for example, declares that the whole of creation is a threefold reflection of the Trinity'.[550]

5.3.2 Human Nature and Individual Hypostasis

Moving on from nature as a whole, Staniloae takes another step in order to understand what we may learn from human nature about the internal dynamics of the Trinity, which, as an image of the Creator, it reflects.

In order to describe the unity and continuity of the human nature's subsisting in many hypostases, Staniloae uses the creative analogy of a string with many knots. This image illustrates both the essential unity between the human beings and the simultaneity of their common nature and their individual hypostases, for,

[549] Staniloae, *EG, 1:*250.
[550] Staniloae, *EG, 1:*250.

> we cannot say that the string exists first and only then come the knots, or that the attenuated string between the knots does not belong to the latter in common. Nor can it be said that the knots produce the string between them. Both string and knots – or at least some of the knots – exist simultaneously. The knots communicate through the string and bring one another into existence. They are able to become more and more interior to one another.[551]

Further on, Staniloae leaves the linear analogy and develops a spatial model, imagining every human being as being 'like a star', at 'the centre of endless rays' through which 'persons are joined together as in a huge net of mesh'. The obvious conclusion is that the created human order 'unfolds the paradox of unity in plurality'.[552]

Complex as it is, this analogy of one human nature existing in a plurality of human hypostases has obvious limits in terms of its ability to reflect the intricacy of the intra-trinitarian relations. For example, compared to the unity of the divine persons, the unity between human beings is much less, because, says Staniloae, following Gregory of Nazianzus, we are 'not only compound beings, but also contrasted beings, both with one another and within ourselves'.[553]

Unlike in the case of human nature, we cannot conceive of any attenuation between the divine persons. The perfect love or total absence of selfishness between the persons of the Trinity makes them free from the tendency, common among humans, to annex or possess the other as an object.

We can now move from the analogy of the human nature to the testimony of Jesus Christ, the God-man, the incarnated Son of God, who is the supreme divine revelation, treasured in the Tradition of the Church and transmitted to us in Holy Scriptures.

5.4 Conclusions

Let us summarise the key observations we have made in this chapter.

From the central role that it played in patristic times, the doctrine of the Trinity became progressively neglected in the Scholastic period and then was particularly

[551] Staniloae, *EG, 1:*253.

[552] Staniloae, *EG, 1:*254.

[553] Staniloae, *EG, 1:*252.

eclipsed during the Enlightenment. It was only in the middle of the twentieth century that theologians applied themselves to the subject with renewed vigour and a new interest in trinitarianism was born. Hegel, Barth and Rahner have been acknowledged as the important precursors of this trinitarian renewal. The main characteristic of this development was a healthier emphasis on the economic Trinity. This renewed interest was not without certain dangers, the main one being a neglect of the ontological aspects of the doctrine under discussion.

One important aspect of the trinitarian renewal in recent decades has been the recovery of the doxological and social as well as the pastoral implications of the doctrine of the triune God. Moreover, the doctrine of the Trinity has become the integrating factor for such diverse theologies as those formulated by Barth, LaCugna, Moltmann and Staniloae.

The first truth that stands out very clearly from our presentation in this section of our thesis is that Staniloae is a thoroughly trinitarian theologian. He stands firmly on the trinitarian foundation laid by the Cappadocian Fathers and adds to theirs insights from other patristic sources, like Maximus, the Damascene and Palamas.

Staniloae develops his understanding of the Trinity in polemic with the Augustinian psychological model of the Trinity based on the functions of the human mind. He considers that this account of the divine unity, as rooted in the impersonal concept divine substance, is problematic. To this, he prefers, together with many contemporary theologians, including some Catholics, the account of divine unity formulated by the Cappadocians, as being rooted in the person of the Father.

Staniloae does not accept the radical separation between natural and supernatural revelation that characterises some Protestant theologies. As we have shown, the analogy of nature, his 'philocalical vision of the world', provides Staniloae with valuable insights into the doctrine of the Trinity. Thus, instead of starting his trinitarian elaboration with speculative considerations on the mystery of the immanent Trinity, Staniloae begins with revelation, natural and supernatural, which grounds his triadology solidly in salvation history.

Staniloae's approach is holistic. For him, the scope of God's salvation is not just humanity, but the whole of creation. God, in his wisdom, has reserved humanity a

special function in accomplishing this plan, hence its role as a 'connecting ring' between God and the cosmos.

Staniloae also insists on a doxological approach of the doctrine of the Trinity. He does not look down on a cataphatic approach of trinitarianism. On the contrary, contra Lossky, he insists on the necessary role of cataphaticism. Nevertheless, his purpose is not to develop a speculative rational explanation of the inner dynamic of the Trinity, but to enrich the doxological experience of the community of faith in her worship of the God that was revealed to us as Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Staniloae insists on the legitimacy of the analogies between the perichoretic dynamic of the trinitarian persons and human relationships. At the same time, he is aware of the limits of these analogies, given both the creatureliness of humanity and its fallen state. Nevertheless, even if limited, these analogies hold the potential of opening fruitful perspectives on God's renewed humanity.

6 The Trinity and Our Salvation

In the previous chapter, we have explored how Staniloae understands the mystery of the Holy Trinity, as it is reflected in creation and the human person, particularly in relation to the person of the Father. We are moving now to an analysis of the way in which Staniloae understands the Trinity as reflected in salvation history.

The step we take now is not a mere juxtaposition of two different and disconnected layers of revelation. Because of the two natures present in the one *hypostasis* of Christ, as expressed in the definition of Chalcedon, Christ is both consubstantial with us according to humanhood and consubstantial with the Father and the Spirit, according to divinity and personhood. He is the link connecting us to the Father.[554]

From this perspective, the person of Jesus Christ should be at the centre of our trinitarian endeavours, and this is precisely the emphasis in most contemporary triadology. As LaCugna points out, this is accomplished in different ways by the different theological traditions in terms of the 'mystery of the cross' in the Protestant tradition, or in terms of 'the mystery of incarnation' in the Catholic, and, we may add, also in the Orthodox tradition, although in fact 'there is only one mystery: "God was in Christ reconciling the world to himself"'.[555]

It is in this context that Staniloae discusses the reason why the Church condemned Nestorianism. This was not just because it claimed the existence of two persons, one human and the other divine in the body of Jesus Christ, but also on the basis of the realisation that, in so doing, it was denying the involvement of the whole Trinity in our salvation.

Staniloae argues that the best response to this heresy came from the 'Schythian monks', who lived in the sixth century in Dobrogea (in the southeast of present day Romania, between the Danube and the Black Sea), whose formula 'One in the Trinity suffered with his body' created the necessary balance between the monophysite

[554] Staniloae, EG, 1:37.

[555] LaCugna, 'Re-conceiving the Trinity', 15.

tendencies in the east and the Nestorian tendencies in the west.[556] In spite of the existence of such nuanced solutions, the persistence of Nestorian tendencies in the contemporary Church may be responsible for the Docetic inclination of Orthodoxy[557] and for the pervading Christomonism of the west. The explanation for this state of affairs can be found both in the complexity of the issue and in the troubled history which surrounds it.

6.1 The Immanent and the Economic Trinity – Rahner's Axiom

As we shall see below, one of the most significant and disputed attempts to articulate the extent to which revelation and particularly salvation history gives us a glimpse into God's transcendence is what has come to be known as 'Rahner's Rule'.[558] In this, Rahner argues that 'the *basic thesis* which... presents the Trinity as a mystery of salvation in its reality (and not merely as a doctrine) might be formulated as follows: The "economic' Trinity is the "immanent" Trinity and the "immanent" Trinity is the "economic" Trinity'.[559] According to Thompson, this is 'basically a one-sided programmatic statement intended to focus attention on the reality of the triune nature of God in relation to his saving acts in time and space'. Through this formula, Rahner 'seeks to link the being of God (immanent) with the mystery of the free grace of God to us and our world (economic)' and 'wishes to emphasize that it is God who communicates himself to us'.[560] In fact, as LaCugna argues, Rahner's purpose in his whole treatise *The Trinity* is 'to restore to Christian consciousness and theology the

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[556] Staniloae, 'Sfinta Treime Creatoarea', 24–25. The author suggests that apparently Leontius of Byzantium was himself a member of this group of monks, who 'have imposed the true Christology, in the trinitarian context of the Church, as it is witnessed in the New Testament'.

[557] See, for instance, V. Kesich, "The Orthodox Church and Biblical Interpretation," in *St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*, 37, 4 (1993), 346–347.

[558] According to Grenz, 'no [other] principle has had a greater influence in shaping the trinitarian theological comversation in the twentiesth century' – *Rediscovering the Triune God. Trinity in Contemporary Theology* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004) 217.

[559] K. Rahner, *The Trinity* (New York: Herder and Herder, 1970) 21–22. Kasper (*God of Jesus Christ*, 274) suggests that Rahner's Rule was anticipated in the nineteenth century by F. A. Staudenmaier – *Die Christliche Dogmatik* (Freiburg, 1844) 2:475 – who wrote about the 'vanity of the distinction between the Trinity of being and Trinity of revelation'.

[560] Thompson, *Modern Trinitarian Perspectives*, 26.

dead meaning of the threefold God in order to work out a "permanent *perichoresis*" (mutual indwelling) between salvation and theological theory'.[561]

One strange effect of the disconnection between trinitarianism and the economy of salvation in post-Augustinian western theology is the idea that '*any* or *every* divine person might become incarnate; therefore, the incarnation of the *Logos* is arbitrary and tells us nothing about God's inner life'. It is also against this aberration, at least from the eastern Orthodox perspective, that Rahner formulates his rule. He believes that 'there is only one hypostatic union, that of the Logos'.[562] Staniloae would certainly agree with Rahner on this point.

For the Rule to make any sense, we have to avoid interpreting the axiom as a tautology.[563] Its purpose is not to collapse the immanent Trinity into the economic Trinity, nor to confuse the two, but rather 'to assert that no gap can be inserted between God and God for us'.[564] In fact, according to LaCugna, Rahner's intention was not to make an ontological statement, but to offer a methodological insight for conceiving of the relationship between God *in se* and God *pro nobis*.[565]

As Sanders rightly points out, this concise statement 'pulls in two directions at once. On the one hand, it takes the focus off of the immanent Trinity and redirects it to the economic Trinity… On the other hand, the axiomatic character of the rule raises the question of why these two realities should be distinguished if they are in fact simply identical'.[566]

Sanders starts his discussion of various interpretations of the 'rule' by stating that

> although the task of reconciling the threeness with oneness is still prominent in contemporary theology (especially as it bears on the choice between a

[561] LaCugna, 'Re-conceiving the Trinity', 4. For a reaffirmation of the necessary *perichoresis* between doctrines, 'particularly between Christology, pneumatology and trinitarian doctrine', see LaCugna and McDonnell, 'Returning from "the Far Country"', 191.

[562] LaCugna, 'Re-conceiving the Trinity', 6.

[563] See on this Kasper, *God of Jesus Christ*, 276, and LaCugna, 'Introduction' in K. Rahner, *The Trinity* (New York: Seabury, 1997), xv.

[564] Grenz, *Social God*, 40.

[565] LaCugna, 'Introduction', xv.

[566] F. Sanders, 'Entangled in the Trinity: Economic and Immanent Trinity in Recent Theology', *Dialog*, 40, 3, 2001, 177.

> psychological versus a social analogy), theologians in recent decades have focused on a different question: the relationship between the triune God and the world.[567]

Sanders argues that how one interprets the Rule sheds light on a whole series of dogmatic concerns. Thus, 'Rahner's Rule functions as a watershed between two types of trinitarian theology', dividing its commentators into two categories: (1) 'the tight interpreters', theologians such as Schoonenberg,[568] Jüngel,[569] Moltmann,[570] Pannenberg[571], Peters,[572] and LaCugna, who are 'tightening the knot between God and the world',[573] and (2) 'the loose interpreters', those such as Congar, Kasper and Thomas Torrance, who 'have attempted to loosen those knots at a few strategic points'.[574]

The first group appear to read the rule as a first step towards bringing God and the world closer theologically. Even though the authors concerned have differences between them, their general approach to this issue runs the risk of obliterating the difference between God's transcendence and his immanence, of reducing God to what is revealed of him, or of 'collapsing the immanent Trinity into the economic Trinity and

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[567] Sanders 'Entangled', 175.

[568] P. Schoonenberg, 'Trinität – der vollendete Bund. Thesen zur Lehre vom dreipersonlichen Gott', *Orientierung*, 1973, 115–117 (LaCugna accuses this article of reflecting 'a "Sabellian" type of imbalance' – 'Re-conceiving the Trinity', 3, n. 5). See also 'Trinity – The Consummated Covenant: Theses on the Doctrine of the Triune God', *Sciences religieuses*, 5/2, 1975, 111–116. We should to point out that in a later article, 'The Doctrine of the Trinity: An Empty Dogma or A Fruitful Theologoumenon?', *Louvain Studies*, 16, 3, 1991, 195–206, Schoonenberg formulates a much more balanced position.

[569] According to Thompson – *Modern Trinitarian Perspectives*, 30–33 – Jüngel, like Moltmann, develops a 'theology of the cross', in the context of which he reinterprets Rahner's axiom, allowing only for a 'minor rational distinction between economic and immanent Trinity'.

[570] In his earlier works, such as *The Crucified God* (London: SCM, 1974) 235–249, Moltmann appears to have accepted Rahner's Rule. However, in his later works, such as *Trinity and the Kingdom,* 144–148, he refuses the identification of the economic and immanent Trinity – see Thompson, Thompson, *Modern Trinitarian Perspectives*, 33.

[571] Pannenberg's trinitarian theology is decidedly eschatological, more so than that of Moltmann. Pannenberg believes that our definition of God cannot be separated from God's action in history. Moreover, the nature of God is determined by the eschatological consummation of the kingdom of God in Christ Jesus as 'the locus of the decision that the trinitarian God is always the true God from eternity to eternity'. In the light of this, although basically accepting Rahner's axiom, Pannenberg aims to avoid 'the absorption of the immanent Trinity into the economic Trinity', which 'steals from the Trinity of salvation history all sense and significance' – Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1:327–336.

[572] According to this author, Rahner's principle implies that 'the relationality that God experiences through Christ's saving relationship to the world is constitutive of trinitarian relations proper. God's relations *ad extra* become God's relations *ad intra*'. Peters, *God as Trinity*, 96.

[573] Sanders 'Entangled', 177–180.

[574] Sanders 'Entangled', 177.

making God dependent on his historical manifestations'.[575] Moreover, the 'tight interpreters' bring the Godhead and the salvation of the world tightly together. 'In fact', argues Sanders, 'the knot is so tight and complex, that the two realities seem to have become merged into a single mass'.[576] The root of this problem may be in the ambiguity and conciseness of the rule itself, which fails to distinguish clearly 'between the free mystery of grace in the economy and the *necessary* mystery of the Trinity *per se*'.[577]

The second group appear to agree with Congar[578] who, although accepting Rahner's statement, argued that 'a world of theological confusion lurked in the second half of the axiom'.[579] The members of this group agree that there is harmony and congruence between the economic and immanent Trinity, but they refuse an understanding of this relationship that would allow the immanent Trinity to collapse into the economic Trinity, and, implicitly, to obliterate the distinctions between God and the world. As Gunton rightly points out, 'for the world to be truly the world, it needs a God who is both other than it and who is able to love it for itself, because it is the world to which God has given being'.[580]

Although Staniloae never discusses Rahner's Rule in his *Dogmatic Theology*, we have reasons to conclude that he would have been in basic agreement with Rahner. It is true that for Staniloae, faithfully following the eastern patristic tradition, the task of reconciling threeness with oneness is still at the centre of the trinitarian debate. Nevertheless, as we have seen above, Staniloae does not feel compelled to choose between this and the other more modern question of the relationship between the Trinity and the world. At the same time, he would surely align himself rather with the 'loose interpreters' of the Rule, insisting on the essential distinction between God's transcendence and the created order. We may conclude then that, as Grenz comments about Pannenberg, for Staniloae also 'the question of the unity of the triune God cannot be answered from the perspective of God's essence apart from the mutual relations of

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[575] Thompson, *Modern Trinitarian Perspectives*, 28.

[576] Sanders 'Entangled', 180.

[577] Thompson, *Modern Trinitarian Perspectives*, 27.

[578] Y. Congar, *I Believe in the Holy Spirit* (New York: Crossroad, 1997) 3: 11–18.

[579] Sanders 'Entangled', 180.

[580] C. E. Gunton, 'The God of Jesus Christ', *Theology Today*, 54, 3, Oct. 1997, 34.

the three persons as disclosed in their work in the world – that is, apart from the economy of salvation'.[581]

Before we conclude this discussion, we need to mention that in spite of the positive results of the shift of emphasis from the immanent to the economic trinity, as promoted by Rahner's axiom, some theologians have expressed doubts about the usefulness of maintaining the paradigm of the economic and immanent Trinity. Groppe[582] summarizes LaCugna's reservations about this paradigm well: (1) *the terminology of this paradigm is 'misleading and confusing'* (divine 'immanence' describes God's interaction with creation, while in this paradigm the term 'immanent' is used with the opposite meaning[583]; the same is true or the phrase 'economic Trinity', since in the strict sense of the word we only have an economic 'binity';[584] (2) *this paradigm 'can appear to suggest that there are two Trinities'* – in fact we are not dealing with 'two numerically discrete realities', but with 'two ways of conceiving the trinitarian mystery of God';[585] (3) it '*hampers exercise of the doxological character of theology*', as we do not pray and offer praise 'to the Trinity' but rather 'to God through Jesus Christ in the Holy Spirit'; (4) this paradigm '*hampers the articulation of a nuanced theology of God's freedom'*, since it tends to make God's action *ad extra* a necessity rather than a free expression of the divine grace;[586] (5) it '*hinders the articulation of a trinitarian theology that expresses the depth of the mystery of Incarnation and grace without subsuming God into a world process*' – as LaCugna explains, if the copula 'is' in Rahner's axiom is understood as an expression of strict ontological identity between the immanent and economic Trinity, then 'it would be

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[581] Grenz, *Social God*, 50.

[582] Groppe, 731–741.

[583] The use of 'immanent' as a description of the essential Trinity may come from the use of the concept of *immanentia* as a description for 'a class of divine attributes, opposed to the *transeuntia* or "transitive" ones' – H. Blocher, 'Immanence and Transcendence in Trinitarian Theology' in K. J. Vanhoozer (ed.), *The Trinity in a Pluralistic Age. Theological Essays on Culture and Religion* (Grand Rapids Mi. and Cambridge, U.K.: Eerdmans, 1997) 104.

[584] Consequently 'the term economic Trinity does not convey the crucial distinction between God (Unoriginate Origin) and the economic missions of the Word and the Spirit through whom the cosmos is created and redeemed' – Groppe, 733.

[585] See on this D. Coffey, *Deus Trinitas: The Doctrine of the Triune God* (New York: Oxford, 1999) 14 and also J. Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 151. Groppe (p. 733–743) rightly comments that nobody would venture to subscribe to the trinitarian formula 'one nature, two trinities, three persons'.

[586] See on this Thompson, *Modern Trinitarian Perspectives*, 27 and J. Zizioulas, 'The Doctrine of the Trinity Today. Suggestions for an Ecumenical Study' in *The Forgotten Trinity*, 23–24.

difficult to see how Rahner's axiom differs from pantheism';[587] (6) it '*inhibits the realization of the practical and soteriological implications of the doctrine of the Trinity*' – whenever in this paradigm God's freedom and God's non-identity with the world are emphasised, there is always the risk of disjoining theology proper from soteriology and implicitly from its practical character; (7) this paradigm '*perpetuates the use of a metaphysics of substance*', which is ultimately Aristotelian and in which 'the truest statement that one can make about anything is a statement about what it is *in se* or in itself'; and, finally (8) that it 'structures theological discourse with a distinction between God as immanent and economic which can eclipse or become confused with the more fundamental distinction between God and creature'.[588]

In order to counteract these weaknesses, according to Groppe, LaCugna proposes an alternative paradigm, that of the 'inseparability of *theologia* (i.e. the mystery of God) and *oikonomia* (i.e. the mystery of salvation)', in which *theologia* is not a simple substitute for the 'immanent trinity' and *oikonomia* is not a substitute for the 'economic trinity'. This renewed terminology, rooted in a relational rather than a substantialist ontology,[589] has a number of advantages: (1) *it is more consistent with biblical, credal, liturgical and ante-Nicene theological formulations*; (2) it *maintains the fundamental insight that the economy of salvation is grounded in the eternal being of God and God is none other than the God who has been revealed to be in the Incarnation of the Word and the gift of the Holy Spirit*; and, finally (3) *it ensures that soteriology will not be divorced from theology proper*.[590]

Although the two so-called paradigms appear to be more different terminologically than conceptually, we have to admit that LaCugna's proposal presents itself as a worthy alternative and a possible solution to the many problems inherent in the previous model.

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[587] LaCugna. *God for Us*, 216.

[588] As an example of this possible misunderstanding, Groppe (p. 740) mentions what she understands to be Thompson's assumption (*Modern Trinitarian Perspectives*, 26) that to identify the immanent and economic Trinity would mean 'to draw up creaturely aspects into the deity and blur the very real distinction between God and humanity. However, Groppe's criticism is incorrect, because Thompson is talking about something else, more precisely, about the identification of the economic trinity with the historical events that are the result of the 'economic action *ad extra*'.

[589] Groppe (p. 762) defines relational ontology in a manner similar to Zizioulas: 'to be is to be persons-in-communion'.

[590] Groppe, 741–753.

6.2 The Monarchy of the Father

As we continue to consider the problem of conceptualising the divine unity, we need at this point to discuss another important topic, that of the place of the Father in trinitarian theology in general and in Staniloae's theology in particular. Discussing the doctrine of appropriations in Aquinas, Blocher observes that even if the 'attributes or works belong to all three [divine] persons' we may nevertheless observe 'a special kinship, a privileged affinity, between *this* attribute and *that* person'. Thus '*transcendence*, although we should ascribe it to the Son and the Spirit as well, is undoubtedly *appropriated to the Father*. The Father, ordinarily, answers to the name *Theos* in the New Testament'. Obviously, this does not imply subordinationism, but simply trinitarian *taxis*.

Staniloae does not develop a comprehensive theology of the Father. In fact, de Margerie may be right when he suggests that generally 'we are not in possession of a theological and biblical reflection that adequately synthesizes the teaching of Revelation on the first person of the Trinity'.[591] Bloesch also adds: 'whereas in the first part of the twentieth century the Holy Spirit seemed to be the missing person of the Trinity, this is now more true for the Father'.[592]

As we have already stated, for Staniloae, who follows the eastern Fathers on this matter as he does on many others, the starting point in developing a theology of the Holy Trinity is not to be found in the impersonal category of *ousia*, as in classic Catholic theology, following Augustine.[593] He builds his trinitarian understanding by starting from the ontological category of person, more precisely the person of the Father, for, according to Staniloae, 'the person is nothing other than the mode of real subsistence that belongs to a nature'. This, however, does not mean that 'there exists an

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[591] Margerie, *Christian Trinity*, 148. The author however mentions E. Guerry, *Vers le Père* (Bruges, 1949) and P. Galot, *Le Coeur du Père* (Bruges, 1957) as worth taking in consideration, although they are not systematic treatments of the subject. We may also add to this the distinctive and valuable work of Tom Smail, *The Forgotten Father. Rediscovering the Heart of the Christian Gospel* (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1980), P. Widdicombe's monograph *The Fatherhood of God from Origen to Athanasius* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1994) and the substantial article of Verna Harrison, 'The Fatherhood of God in Orthodox Theology', *SVTQ*, 37, 2 and 3, 1993, 185–212.

[592] D. G. Bloesch, *The Holy Spirit. Works and Gifts* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2000) 48.

[593] 'Unlike Tertullian… [Augustine] identifies the substratum [of the Trinity] not with the Father but with something underlying both the Father and the Son' – Wolfson, *Philosophy*, 326.

impersonal being which gives itself the character of subject. Being does not have real existence except in a hypostasis, or – in the case of spiritual beings – in the conscious subject'.[594]

Even when, echoing Gregory of Nazianzus, Staniloae talks about the Godhead as a whole as being 'the first cause or the *monarchia*', he insists that the Father is still the fountain of divinity, or the source of the other two persons in the Holy Trinity:

> The Father projects himself within himself as filial sun… Moreover, the Father also projects himself as another sun, as Holy Spirit, revealing himself as another sun, as Holy Spirit, revealing himself even more luminously as paternal sun and revealing the Son in the same fashion as filial sun. They are three real hypostases, three real modes in which the same infinite light subsists. Each appears shining through the other two as bearer of the same infinite light, being itself interior to them and having them interior to himself.[595]

This is not an unimportant matter, as may appear at first sight. The issue at stake is whether we should accept the postulation of an impersonal foundation of divinity (as rooted in the somewhat impersonal concept of 'divine essence') or rather insist on a personal foundation, as rooted in the person of the Father. Since ideas obviously have consequences, the choice between these two possible approaches has produced radically different theological systems, as has occurred in western (both Catholic and Protestant) Christianity and the eastern (mostly Orthodox) Christianity.

The same would be true, however, if we were to reverse the terms of the equation. We may argue that context determines to a large extent the kind of theology we formulate and profess. Thus Staniloae for example, who lived most of his adult life under communism, was relatively immune to the inherent Marxist leanings that permeate much of liberation theology. Consequently, although aware of the key emphases in the theology of his friend Moltmann,[596] Staniloae never gave serious attention to Moltmann's warning that a hierarchical view of the Trinity and implicitly the conception of the 'monarchy of the Father' would condone social structures of

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[594] Staniloae, *EG*, 1:256.

[595] Staniloae, *EG*, 1:255.

[596] Moltmann met Staniloae a number of times after his release from prison, in the context of various ecumenical theological meetings and expressed his admiration by dedicating to him his book *History and the Triune God* (New York: Crossroad, 1992 and London: SCM, 1991).

domination (absolutism, totalitarianism, patriarchialism, etc). Thus, Moltmann writes: 'it is only when the doctrine of the Trinity vanquishes the monotheistic notion of the great universal monarch in heaven, and his divine patriarch in the world, that earthly rulers, dictators and tyrants cease to find any justifying religious archetypes anymore'.[597]

At the same time, we can agree with Newbigin that 'the doctrine of the Trinity was not developed in response to the human need for participatory democracy. It was developed in order to account for the facts that constitute the substance of the Gospel…'[598] This does not mean that trinitarian doctrine is not to speak into contemporary social matters, nor that Christian *koinonia*, as a mirror of the intra-trinitarian communion, cannot be a worthy goal of human existence. Nevertheless, it should be allowed to function prophetically, rather than a means of condoning in an *a priori* manner, concerns extrinsic to the Gospel, or – even worse – of becoming merely an expression of the latest philosophical and political trends.

Having suffered personally the consequences of a system built on Marxist, allegedly 'liberating' theory, Staniloae entertained no illusions of a liberationist kind. Had he lived, as Boff did, in the context of the striking economic and social disparities of South America, he might have been more interested in this issue. This does not mean that Staniloae was not interested in the social implications of trinitarianism; quite the contrary. However, the main target of his social analysis was the individualism of modern culture, which in his opinion was nurtured in the west by a trinitarianism rooted in the Augustinian psychological model. Moreover, when dealing with the Christian responsibility in areas like 'justice, equality, brotherhood and lasting peace',[599] Staniloae sets the discussion in the general context of Christology and soteriology, rather than in that of triadology, and emphasises mystical living rather than social activism.

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[597] Moltmann, *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 197.

[598] L. Newbigin, 'The Trinity as Public Truth' in Vanhoozer, *Trinity in a Pluralistic Age*, 7. The author formulates this conclusion in the context of a discussion about Konrad Raiser's contrast between 'Christocentric universalism' and the 'trinitarian paradigm', as presented in *Ecumenism in Transition: A Paradigm Shift in the Ecumenical Movement* (Geneva: WCC, 1991). Newbigin rejects the dichotomy between the two approaches and suspects that Raiser's preference is rooted in extra-theological and extra-exegetical reasons.

[599] Staniloae, *TC*, 211. See also W. B. Green, 'Review of D. Staniloae, *Theology and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: SVSP, 1980)', *Anglican Theological Review*, 63, 1981, 361–362.

Following his traumatic prison experiences, Staniloae never ventured to challenge openly the communist ideological foundation and its dehumanising effect on society. His approach to this issue was, rather, an indirect one, which involved nurturing within the Romanian Orthodox context a mystical renewal that is at the same time neo-patristic and hesychastic.

Working from different presuppositions than those of Moltmann, Staniloae does not make any connection between the 'monarchy of the Father' and its supposed encouragement of totalitarianism. The context of his discussion is theological, not social and political. Staniloae conceives of the Father as having the supreme role in the Trinity, and he does so in the context of trinitarian *perichoresis* and the polemic with the Catholics on the *filioque*. Because of this polemical stance, Staniloae leaves the impression that he is at odds here with most Catholic theology. Yet, although this may be correct for those Catholic theologians who strictly follow the Augustinian tradition,[600] it does not do justice to those contemporary Catholic theologians who tend towards a more personalist approach. Thus, argues de Margerie:

> The Father is the foundation and principle of intra-divine unity. It is the Father and not the divine essence considered abstractly, who is the principle of the Son and of the Spirit; and a principle without principle, for the Father himself does not spring from some mysterious impersonal essence… The Father is the summit of the Holy Trinity, the principle of the divine monarchy, the recapitulator of this monarchy.[601]

6.3 Homoousios *and the Divinity of the Son*

The sudden impulse of the primitive church to worship Jesus as God, following his resurrection and the experience of Pentecost, confronted classic Jewish monotheism with a serious challenge. To what extent could the early Christians still maintain strict monotheism, while affirming the divinity of Christ and his equality with the Father? This was also the most debated theological issue in the fourth century AD, at the end of which the orthodox Christian doctrine of God was formulated. For some, as for Arius, this reconciliation was an impossible task. According to him, in order to safeguard the

[600] In the sense of giving precedence to the divine nature over the persons.

[601] Margerie, *Christian Trinity*, 148–149. The author contends that he is not expressing just his own opinions here, but he is simply repeating various formulations of the *magisterium*.

transcendence of the One God, Jesus had to be conceived of as being 'like God', or 'of a similar nature' (*homoiousios*) and also the first and the highest of his creations, but not fully God. And at a certain point the majority of the Church appeared to follow him.

Arguing on inflexible literalistic grounds, the Arians rejected the concept of *homoousios* ('of the same nature or being') used by Athanasius to express the essential unity between the Father and the Son, as being unbiblical. The first ecumenical council at Nicaea (325) settled the debate in favour of the Athanasian position, but the confrontation between the two parties continued, theologically and otherwise, for many decades after this conciliar decision has been made.[602]

In relation to the implications of this debate, Staniloae argues that the Church in the west was not aware of the dangers inherent in the unilateral use of the term *homoousios*. According to him, the root of the problem consisted in the ambiguity of the Aristotelian concept of *ousia*. Aristotle used it first in the sense of 'being subsisting as an individual', 'primary being' (*proote ousia*) or 'concrete being', and secondly in the sense of 'common being' or 'secondary being' (*deutera ousia*). Staniloae argues that the Nicene Fathers have used *homoousios* with the sense of 'common being', while the heretics interpreted it in the other sense, but with opposing attitudes and for different purposes: the Monarchians, accepting it in order to deny the Trinity, and the Arians, who oppose it, accusing the Council of confusing the Father and the Son in one *hypostasis*.[603] It was Basil the Great, the first of the Cappadocian Fathers, who connected the term with the concept of *hypostasis*, which made it impossible for *homoousios* to be used in a Sabellian sense and also for the phrase 'three *hypostaseis*' to be interpreted in an Arian sense.[604]

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[602] The space available does not allow us to elaborate on the complex issue of Arianism. For an in-depth classic analysis see R. P. C. Hanson, *The Search for the Christian Doctrine of God. The Arian Controversy. 318–381* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark: 1988). See also Rowan D. Williams, *Arius: Tradition and Heresy* (London: DLT 1987) and T. F. Torrance, *The Trinitarian Faith. The Evangelical Theology of the Ancient Catholic Church* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1988). For an attempt to commend some aspects of Arianism, see M. Wiles, *The Making of Christian Doctrine: A Study in the Principles of Early Doctrinal Development* (Cambridge: CUP, 1967).

[603] Staniloae, 'Fiinta si ipostasurile', 53.

[604] Staniloae, 'Studii catolice', 478–479. See also LaCugna, 'Re-conceiving the Trinity', 3, on the constant temptation in modern trinitarianism towards 'running aground' in one or the other of these directions.

6.4 The Divinity of the Spirit

The next Councils dealt, among other matters, with the divinity of the Holy Spirit, thus establishing the dogma of the One God existing eternally in three hypostases as the touchstone of all orthodoxy. The issue of the divinity of the Holy Spirit was in no way a secondary matter for soteriology. Staniloae explains that, whereas in the incarnation and the saving work of Christ God as it were comes 'down' to us, in the Spirit, God 'becomes wholly immanent and yet imprints upon all men this yearning for the transcendent God'. In order to be able to do this, the Spirit has to be a person, so that we are enabled to come into a personal, deifying communion with God. On the other hand, the Spirit's role in the economy of salvation is based on the role he plays within the Trinity: 'The Spirit plays the special role of "bearer of love" from the Father to the Son and from the Son to the Father'.[605]

Thus the supreme expression of the divine love that binds together the persons of the Trinity is revealed to us in the work of salvation and deification described by Staniloae as being nothing less than an extension to conscious creatures of the relations within the Trinity. This is why the Orthodox understanding of salvation stands primarily on trinitarian premises.[606]

Staniloae believes that, being a bridge between God and creation, man has both the consciousness of his 'origin from nothing, but also of his grandeur as son of God through grace, together with the only begotten Son, from the being of God'.[607] The fact of being created in the image of the triune God makes humans able to rise up to God through deification.

Only the existence of a triune God, argues Staniloae, allowed for the divine transcendence to be safeguarded while the Son became incarnate. At the same time, only on the basis of the hypostatic union of the divine and human natures in the person of Jesus Christ, through the paracletic work of grace done by the Holy Spirit, could human beings, alienated from God because of sin, regain their original communion with the Creator as his sons and daughters.

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[605] Staniloae, 'Sfinta Treime, structura', 99.

[606] Staniloae, *EG, 1:*248.

[607] Staniloae, 'Sfinta Treime, Creatoarea', 20.

This communion is one characterised by love, called as it is to reflect in spatio-temporal reality the loving communion exiting eternally between the three divine persons. It is this aspect of the inner dynamic of the Trinity that we will analyse in the next few paragraphs.

6.5 The Trinity – Perfect Loving Union of Distinct Persons

Although Staniloae never used the phrase 'social trinitarianism', it usefully describes the type of doctrine of the Trinity that he develops in his systematic work.[608] As many commentators observe,[609] the concepts of 'person' and 'communion' dominate his theological endeavour. In fact he declares it himself when he says: "person and communion. Not just communion, but also person.'[610] In this respect at least, his understanding comes close to that of Zizioulas, who uses the concept of communion as a means of defining the divine nature ontologically.

The most common concept with which Staniloae associates the Holy Trinity is that of love, conceived as a paradoxical union of two elements: on one side a multiplicity of divine subjects who relate to one another without confusion, and on the other hand 'the highest degree of unity among them'.[611] This combination of a relational view of personhood and the emphasis on the unity of the godhead as expressed in the loving relationship between the three divine persons brings Staniloae very close to the trinitarian theology of Richard of St. Victor (d. 1173)[612] which Bishop Kallistos considers 'one of the most moving and persuasive presentations of God's triunity'.[613]

At the same time love is not only the bond between the persons of the Godhead, but also the reason why God created the world:

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[608] It is likely that, given the limited access to information which he had during the communist regime, Staniloae was not aware of much of the development that took place in triadology in the second half of the twentieth century, particularly in the Anglo-Saxon world.

[609] See, A. L. Don, 'Review of D. Staniloae, *The Experience of God* (Brookline, Ma.: Holy Cross, 1994)', SVTQ, 39, 4, 1995, 426; I. I. Ica, 'De ce "Persoana si comuniune"? Cuvant prevenitor la un "Festschrift" intarziat' in Ica, *PC*, xxiii–xxxi.

[610] S. Dumitrescu, *7 Dimineti cu Parintele Staniloae* (Bucuresti: Anastasia, 1992) 22.

[611] Staniloae, *EG, 1:*245.

[612] Richard of St. Victor, *De Trinitate*. See Thomson, *Modern Trinitarian Perspectives*, 132.

[613] Kallistos, 'Human Person', 9. The author adds (p. 10) that St Victor's analogy 'remains deeply convincing, with fewer drawbacks that any of the alternative "models"'.

> Only from [the perspective of] an eternal and infinite act of love can we explain the creation of other existing things and all God's other acts of love for them. Love must exist in God prior to all those acts of his, which are directed outside himself; it must be bound up with his eternal existence. Love is the 'being of God'; it is his 'substantial act'.[614]

Thus love is not an external standard to which God has to conform, which would contradict his status as supreme final reality,[615] but the supreme expression of the divine nature. This does not mean, however, that love produces the divine persons, as, Staniloae suggests, would be the position of Catholic theology. In fact, he argues, love 'presupposes a common being in three persons'.[616]

Although Staniloae's criticism of a certain substantialist understanding of love as manifested in the Trinity is probably justified in the case of Augustine and others who have followed him strictly, it is not valid in the case of the medieval theologian Richard of St. Victor, whose distinctive contribution to trinitarianism consists precisely in the development of a 'social model' of the Trinity 'that is in many ways closer to the Greek idea of the Trinity (especially as expressed by the Cappadocians of the fourth century)'.[617] Richard of St. Victor's specific ontology of love as applied to the divine persons could have made his theology a rich source for Staniloae's own description of the Trinity as 'perfect loving union' between the divine persons. However, Staniloae never mentions this medieval theologian in the context of his discussion.

According to Staniloae, love, which is characteristic of the divine essence, is also an expression of God's relationality, which itself presupposes a plurality within the Godhead, though one that does not sacrifice divine unity. Staniloae takes over Buber's terminology in order to explain this. Thus, he says:

> Although I can say 'I', I am conscious that I am 'I' only when I say 'Thou', or when I am conscious of a 'Thou'…I can only say 'him' after I have become

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[614] Staniloae, 'Sfinta Treime, structura', 79.

[615] 'If God needed to relate to something outside himself, this would imply that he lacked something distinct from himself. Divine relations must take place in God himself, although between distinct "I's", so that the relation and hence the love may be real', Staniloae, *EG*, 1:258.

[616] Staniloae, *EG*, 1:245.

[617] Olson and Hall, *Trinity*, 57–58. Aquinas objects to St. Victor's analogy of love, because he argues, in typical scholastic manner, that love 'is a striving to gain what one does not yet posess' and, as such, 'it implies a lack or deficiency', which is inconceivable of God – Kalllistos, 'Human Person', 10.

> conscious of 'Thee'. 'He' is a pronoun used to designate the one who ought to become a 'Thou' for me or who has ceased for a while to be a 'Thou' for me… indeed, I do not talk much about 'him' when I am alone, but only when I am together with 'Thee'. Therefore, 'He' too belongs to the 'I–Thou' unity, as a complement of than unity. I am not complete even in relation with 'Thee', but I am still in need of relation with 'him'.[618]

This is true of all personal beings, but whereas in the case of humans it involves a vast multiplicity of subjects, the three-personed God manifests a kind of 'perfect consubstantiality from which the consubstantiality of created subjects draws strength and towards which it progresses'.[619]

Now, as we have already discussed, Catholic and Orthodox theologians generally understand the basis of unity between the divine persons in different ways. Staniloae begins his explanation by establishing the principle that 'the divine nature is entirely spiritual and that its spirituality is of a kind that transcends all spirituality known or imagined by us'. Because of this, 'the divine hypostases are totally transparent to one another', they are 'wholly interior to one another'.[620] It is in this way that he introduces the idea of the perichoretic nature of divine intra-trinitarian relations, though without mentioning it explicitly.

From the spiritual nature of the Godhead, Staniloae deduces the necessity of a 'hypostatisation of that essence in numerous subjects, in perfect reciprocal interpenetration and transparency', i.e. *perichoresis*. Thus, according to the eastern Fathers, the divine nature is subsistent only in the divine persons and cannot be conceived as being anterior to them. Following the Fathers, Staniloae cannot envisage a divine nature that is not hypostatised.[621] This is why, as we have seen already, he defines the person as 'the mode of real subsistence that belongs to a nature'.[622]

By using this definition, Staniloae appears to have no intention of substituting it for 'person' as a description of the trinitarian entities, as Barth does when he suggests

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[618] Staniloae, 'Sfinta Treime, structura', 82–83.

[619] Staniloae, 'Sfinta Treime, structura', 85.

[620] Staniloae, 'Sfinta Treime, structura', 85.

[621] Obviously, Staniloae follows here the Cappadocians and Maximus the Confessor, who firmly reject the idea of an *ousia anhypostatos*.

[622] Staniloae, *EG*, 1:255–256.

the alternative phrase 'modes of being' (Germ. *Seinweisen*) because of his concern to protect the concept of person from the dangers of tritheism. Barth's suggestion drew upon him accusations of modalism, which were perhaps rather unjust, even though, as Gunton notes, he 'does not finally guard against suspicions of that tendency' and 'fails to reclaim the relational view of the person from the ravages of modern individualism'.[623]

A similar alternative was suggested by Rahner with his phrase 'distinct manners of subsisting',[624] which he uses explicitly in order to protect the understanding of divine personhood from the individualistic connotations of the modern concept of person. According to Olson and Hall,

> Rahner was concerned that the concept 'person' may not be the one suited to express faithfully the distinctions within the trinitarian life of God. In *The Trinity* he argued that use of 'person' following medieval philosopher Boethius' definition 'individual substance of a relational nature' inevitably misleads people to think of the Trinity as 'three individuals'.

In spite of the apparent legitimacy of the concerns expressed by Barth and Rahner,[625] we agree with Thomson and Kasper that in order to solve this problem 'what is needed is not abandonment of the traditional language of person but its reinterpretation'. Even more significant from the perspective of Staniloae's emphasis on the necessarily doxological character of theology, is the fact that the alternatives suggested are 'kerygmatically not meaningful', nor are they usable in 'the language of praise and worship'.[626]

Although well informed on Barth's theology and very sensitive to the negative implications of western individualism, Staniloae did not indicate in his *Dogmatic Theology* that he is aware of this debate in either Barth or Rahner. Working from an eastern and patristic context, he clearly presupposes a communitarian meaning of person

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[623] Gunton, *Promise*, 164.

[624] Rahner, *Trinity*, 109.

[625] Thus, critics accuse some modern exponents of a 'social Trinity' that they 'read back into the patristic terms *prosopon* and *hypostasis* our contemporary sense of what it is to be a person' – Kallistos, 'Human Person, 12. See in this respect, L. Turcescu, '"Person" versus "Individual" and other Modern Misreadings of Gregory of Nyssa', *Modern Theology*, 18, 4, 2002, 527–539.

[626] Thompson, *Modern Trinitarian Perspectives*, 132, commenting on Kasper, *The God of Jesus Christ*, 288.

and suggests the phrase 'of real subsistence' simply as a means of clarifying the concept.

With this, we have finished our succinct overview of Staniloae's general doctrine of the Trinity. Before going any further, let us summarise our findings.

6.6 Conclusions

In the present chapter, we have analysed Staniloae's understanding of the Trinity in the light of salvation history.

Although Staniloae does not discuss in his *Dogmatics* the famous axiom formulated by Rahner, his general approach to triadology gives us reasons to believe that he would side with its 'loose interpreters', such as Congar and Torrance. With them, he would refuse an understanding of the axiom that would allow the immanent Trinity to collapse into the economic Trinity, and, implicitly, to obliterate the distinctions between God and the world. At the same time, he would feel more comfortable with the alternative terminology of *theologia* (understood as the mystery of God) and *oikonomia* (understood as the mystery of salvation) proposed by LaCugna, mainly because of its relational emphasis.

Closely following the eastern patristic tradition, Staniloae insists on the monarchy of the Father, because it allows him to formulate a theology of the Trinity starting from the ontological category of person. His rejection of the Catholic Augustinian alternative of starting from the impersonal category of essence or being, arises from what he considers to be its disastrous pneumatological and ecclesiological implications, as will become apparent in the following chapters.

Staniloae is not concerned by the supposedly totalitarian implications of the monarchy of the Father, as these are formulated by Moltmann. This does not mean that Staniloae is not interested in the social implications of his theology. On the contrary, he expects that his theology will address contemporary issues in a very relevant manner. However, he does not want to allow sociology and politics to control the agenda of theology, but rather wishes theology to inform and critique the social disciplines. At the same time, it is possible that his traumatic experience in the communist prisons led him to be very cautious about being more active socially.

Besides the concept of person, Staniloae also builds his triadology around the concept of community. Hence his social trinitarian conclusion, that within the Trinity there is perfect reciprocal affirmation of the divine 'I's', in such a manner that 'in God it is not possible that one "I" should assert himself over against another "I"'.[627] The complete identification of each of the divine persons with the other two takes place without a loss of identity; rather, the personal identity of each divine 'I' is fully affirmed only through the other members of the Trinity. The circular movement described here by Staniloae is nothing less than an affirmation of the patristic concept of *perichoresis* or *circumincessio*, to which we will return in due course.

In conclusion, revelation places before us the image of a perfect unity of nature within the Godhead, subsisting eternally as the three distinct divine persons. In the Orthodox perspective the concept of person is the primary one. The opposite view, that of the divine unity is being rooted in the divine *ousia*, which is held by most Catholic theologians, is seen by the Orthodox as unacceptable, since it leads to a sort of substantialism, with serious negative pneumatological and ecclesiological consequences, as will become apparent in the following chapters.

However, before dealing with Staniloae's view of trinitarian *perichoresis* we need to clarify his understanding of the procession of the Spirit and the role of the third divine person in the Trinity, without which we cannot adequately conceive of the interpenetration of Father, Son and Holy Spirit that characterises both the internal dynamic of the Holy Trinity and their unified manifestation in the economy.

[627] Staniloae, 'Sfinta Treime, structura', 89.

7 The Holy Spirit and *Filioque*

In the previous chapter, we have explored Staniloae's understanding of the mystery of the Holy Trinity, as it is reflected in creation and in the human person, particularly in relation to the person of the Father and the salvation accomplished in Christ, the Son of God. Yet, a comprehensive understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity would not be possible without giving due attention to the person of the Holy Spirit.

Bray is clearly overstating his case when he asserts that 'much of the history of the Church can be written in terms of trying to grapple with the mystery of the Holy Spirit'.[628] Alternatively, we suggest that, although in the context of the contemporary Pentecostal and charismatic developments pneumatology played an important role in the theological debates of the twentieth century, this has probably not been the case for most of the history of the church. In fact, the doctrine of the Spirit has received comparatively much less attention than Christology, at least in patristic times,[629] if not in most of the first nineteen centuries of Christian history. The history of dogma does not, however, allow us to conclude that pneumatology was ever considered a secondary subject in serious theological debate. Indeed, the issue of the divine identity of the Spirit was always present, albeit implicitly, in most Christological discussions.

We agree with Burgess that, at least where western Christianity is concerned, 'while most Christians have used his name in their religious practices, they have been woefully deficient in their knowledge of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit has always been the "dark side of the moon" in Christian theology. His person has been long ignored and his work largely unrecognized'.[630] Burgess mentions a number of reasons for this neglect of pneumatology. Among them are: (1) 'the difficulty of understanding and defining the

[628] G Bray, 'The Double Procession of the Holy Spirit in Evangelical Theology Today: Do We Still Need It?', *JETS*, 41, 3, Sept. 1998, 415.

[629] This leads Pelikan to complain that at the Council of Nicaea the issue of the Holy Spirit 'had been disposed of in lapidary brevity'– J. Pelikan, *The Christian Tradition. A History of the Development of Doctrine*, vol. 1 (Chicago: CUP, 1971) 211.

[630] S. M. Burgess, *The Spirit and the Church: Antiquity* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1984) 1.

essence of God and, therefore, of his work within the Church through his Spirit';[631] (2) 'a certain vagueness' that surrounds the terminology used to designate the third person of the Godhead; (3) the difficulty the human imagination encounters in attempting to represent the Spirit; (4) the tendency of the ancient church to 'absorb pneumatology into Christology'; and, very importantly, (5) the feeling of some theologians that this is an area 'belonging to extremists and enthusiasts'. He also adds that even the modern charismatic phenomenon has not changed things radically, since charismatics 'have been less anxious to define the divine power of the Spirit than to possess it'.[632] Nevertheless, Bloesch is right when he argues that even if in the first half of the last century 'the Holy Spirit seemed to be the missing person of the Trinity', this is no longer the case.[633]

According to Staniloae, the Orthodox theology of the Holy Spirit can be summarised in the following points: (1) the Spirit cannot be reduced to the Son and he has an equal importance with the Logos; (2) the Spirit is indissolubly connected to the Son of God; (3) the preservation of the filial relation of the Son towards the Father and the affirmation of the third divine person as the Spirit of the Son make the Son the source of divine action towards mankind; (4) the Spirit is understood as an agent of unity, which preserves the identity of the individual persons, both at a divine and at a human level.[634]

7.1 Pneumatology and Filioque

Staniloae argues that, unlike the west with its doctrine of *filioque*, presented as the unique and definitive analogy of the relations between the Spirit and the Son, the east uses a multiplicity of formulae and analogies to describe the mysterious complexity of intra-trinitarian dynamics. From an Orthodox standpoint, as we apprehend it, only such

[631] Hanson disagrees with Burgess at this point. His argues that 'it is not metaphysics that stands in the way of our knowing him, but our involvement in history'. Rather, he attributes the relative obscurity of the Spirit to two other factors: (1) our impossibility to regard with complete objectivity a reality 'immediately concerned with our own intimate subjective apprehension of God'; and (2) being an eschatological reality, the work of the Holy Spirit is not yet complete, and as such difficult to comprehend – R. P. C. Hanson, 'The Position of the Holy Spirit in the Trinity', *Church Quarterly*, 3, 4, 1971, 277.

[632] Burgess, *The Spirit and the Church*, 2–3.

[633] Bloesch, *Holy Spirit*, 48.

[634] Staniloae, 'Sfinta Treime, structura', 106–107.

an approach really does justice to the apophatic nature of the Trinity. Thus, in order to describe the procession of the Spirit and his connection to Christ, says Staniloae, eastern theologians use formulae such as: 'the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and is sent by the Son'; 'the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and rests in the Son'; 'the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and shines and is manifested through the Son'; and 'the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father and comes (προῖέναι) from the Son'.[635] From this we may clearly conclude that Orthodoxy prefers an approach 'from above' to the theology of the Spirit, 'beginning with the doctrine of the immanent Trinity'.[636]

Photius, in his famous encyclical of 867, which initiated the so-called 'Photian schism', accused the western church of 'impious dogma and diabolical invention' in relation to *filioque*.[637] In the end, as we have already mentioned the question of *filioque*, to use Lossky's words, 'has been the sole dogmatic grounds for the separation between east and west' and consequently the greatest stumbling block to the desired restoration of Church unity.[638] This is clearly an overstatement. Congar, who met Lossky and respected him for his 'outstanding ability as a dogmatic theologian', believes that Lossky 'became less obstinate on this point as he got older'. Unfortunately, this happened only after he was able to win over a large number of followers to his extreme position.[639]

On the Catholic side, de Margerie comments condescendingly that 'the Greek speculation represents a first stage of elaboration and evolution of the trinitarian dogma, to which the Latin reflection succeeds at a later stage'.[640]

At the same time, the chief western objection to the eastern position on *filioque* runs something like this: 'the teaching that the Spirit proceeds from the Father alone on the immanent level can easily lead to a by-passing of the Son on the economic level and

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[635] Staniloae, 'Studii catolice', 500. The author does not give the source of these formulae.

[636] Bloesch suggests that, unlike the Orthodox, 'many theologians today encourage us to seek a doctrine of the Spirit 'from below'– beginning with the impact of the Spirit in human life'– *Holy Spirit*, 49.

[637] See Margerie, *Christian Trinity*, 166, n. 42.

[638] Lossky, *Image and Likeness*, 71.

[639] Congar, *Holy Spirit*, 3:xv–xvi.

[640] Margerie, *Christian Trinity*, 161.

to a Spirit-centred mysticism to which the person of Christ can easily become peripheral'.[641]

As we can understand from these two positions, the separation between the east and the west over *filioque* cannot be blamed on just one side. Both camps made their contributions to the widening of the gap between them. Yet, to be fair, we have to admit that not all Catholic theologians, for example, share de Margerie's feeling of superiority. Thus Congar states very firmly: 'I am convinced that the trinitarian faith of the eastern part of the Church was the same as that of the western part'.[642] In the Orthodox camp, a similar conviction is expressed by Stylianopoulos. After a thorough study of the matter, he concluded:

> the *filioque* question does not signal a 'great divide' between the eastern and western churches because these churches commonly confess the dogma of the Holy Trinity and share broad agreement regarding the work ('economy') of the Spirit according to Scripture, tradition and liturgy. The *filioque* marks not a decisive difference in dogma but an important difference in the interpretation of dogma due to the differing Cappadocian and Augustinian approaches to the mystery of the Trinity.[643]

As we have been able to observe from the beginning of this discussion, the procession of the Holy Spirit is a highly divisive issue between the Christian east and west. This is indeed understandable if we realise that the dispute around the *filioque* played a central role in the Great Schism of 1054. It also means that it is very unlikely that we will find many objective evaluations of this subject either in the Catholic or in the Orthodox camp, and, as we shall see in a while, Staniloae is no exception to this general rule.

The sensitive nature of this issue is proved by the fact that, as Needham rightly points out, 'sweeping claims have been made by both east and west, each attributing all that it finds most vile in the other's piety and practice to its acceptance or rejection of

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[641] *The Forgotten Trinity*, 3 vols. (London: The British Council of Churches, 1989) 1:33.

[642] Congar, *Holy Spirit*, 3:xv. Even Margerie adds in a more moderate tone, after the statement quoted above, that 'our era is characterized by a search for a broad synthesis of these two stages' – *Christian Trinity*, 161.

[643] Stylianopoulos, '*Filioque*', 58.

the *filioque* clause'.[644] Thus, Grudem for example, following the Catholic arguments, claims that the rejection of *filioque* by the Orthodox would break the bond between Christ and the Spirit.[645] We find it very difficult to accept this allegation as being justified to any degree. On the other hand, the Orthodox claim that *filioque* is the root of all the problems confronting the Catholic tradition[646] is as unimpressive as that mentioned above. Such statements are, as Needham suggests, nothing but 'alarmist propaganda – from both sides'.[647]

De Margerie, on the other hand, argues that 'the difference between the Latin and Greek theological schemas has been considerably exaggerated and simplified, and the variety of currents and schools within these two worlds overlooked. This exaggeration is due partly to polemic or defensive demands'.[648] De Margerie may be correct in this statement. Nevertheless, it is still true that it is possible to formulate in general terms both a western and an eastern position on the procession of the Spirit, and that these positions are very different from each other in their premises, in their conclusions, and in their implications.

In order to be able to take a more dispassionate view of this contentious issue, it is very important, as Congar suggests, to make a distinction between the teaching on the double procession of the Spirit, reflected by *filioque*, and the inclusion of the formula in the creed.[649] This means that in order to find a solution to this contentious matter, we need to meet at least two conditions: (1) we have to analyse in detail the way the two traditions have interpreted the data of revelation concerning the procession of the Spirit; and (2) we need to understand the different steps of the historical process that have positioned the two traditions on such rigidly opposed grounds. This is exactly what we will try to do in the following biblical and historical analysis.

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[644] N. Needham, 'The *Filioque* Clause: East or West?', *Scottish Bulletin of Evangelical Theology*, 15, 2, Autumn 1997, 158.

[645] W. Grudem, *Systematic Theology* (Leicester: IVP, 1994) 246–247. Such groundless arguments reveal the lack of familiarity of this Evangelical theologian with the intricacies of Eastern Orthodox theology. We contend that he is no exception in this tradition.

[646] See Lossky, *Image and Likeness*, 71, as quoted above.

[647] Needham, '*Filioque*', 158.

[648] Margerie, *Christian Trinity*, 162.

[649] Congar, *Holy Spirit*, 3:49, suggests that this is what Pope Leo III was very cautious about when he was pressed by the envoys of Charlemagne to introduce *filioque* into the creed.

7.2 The Biblical Foundation for Filioque

Most of the biblical data in relation to the theology of the procession of the Spirit is to be found in the gospel of John, with some in the book of Revelation.

Thus, in John 5:19, Jesus declares solemnly: 'the Son can do nothing of himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner' (*NKJV*). Although this verse appears to refer to the earthly ministry of the historical Jesus, Dulles argues, speculatively we believe, that the text would also 'imply that the Son, together with the Father, breathes forth the Spirit'.[650] In arguing in this manner, western theology extrapolates from the economy to the ontology of the Trinity.[651] Most eastern theologians contest the legitimacy of this logical deduction.

In John 15:26, Jesus again explains: 'when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me' (*NKJV*). Congar describes this as 'the reference *par excellence* in favour of the procession from the Father alone', although, at the same time, he correctly points to the fact that the word 'alone' is not found in the biblical text.[652] However, not only does this passage not teach the procession of the Spirit from the Son also, but, as Needham rightly points out, 'Jesus said of the Spirit, "whom I shall send to you from the Father". Not "whom I shall send to you from myself" or "from us", but "from the Father"'.[653] Thus, concludes Needham, the pattern we can observe in this passage is that of 'the Holy Spirit proceeding from the Father to the Son, and then from the Son to us. Christ sends us the Spirit from the Father'.[654]

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[650] A. Dulles, 'The *Filioque*: What Is at Stake?' *Concordia Theological Quarterly*, 59, 1–2, 1995, 39.

[651] See H. B. Swete, *The Holy Spirit in the New Testament* (London, 1909), 304, as quoted by Congar, *Holy Spirit*, 3:55, n. 1. Congar adds that besides this extrapolation, 'it is not possible to say anymore from an exegetical point of view' (3:49).

[652] Congar, *Holy Spirit*, 3:49.

[653] Needham, 155. This argument invalidates the suggestion made by Bray, 'Double Procession', 418, that 'there is no real difference between the language of procession used of the Holy Spirit in John 15 and that of "sending" which John frequently uses of the Son's relationship with the Father'. The author mentions that this is the conclusion formulated by 'many NT scholars' (who remain unnamed in this article). The fact of the matter is that John uses the language of 'procession' only in relation to the Father, while, 'sending' is used both in relation to the sending of the Son by the Father, and the sending of the Spirit by the Son. Any fair conclusion drawn by New Testament scholars should take these undeniable facts in consideration.

[654] Needham, 155.

De Margerie observes correctly that in this text the verb 'to proceed' is not used in relation to the Son coming from the Father, but only with regard to the Spirit proceeding from the Father. Then he adds that 'from this some Orthodox theologians wrongly conclude that it cannot be used to designate the relation of the Spirit to the Son'. He brushes aside these Orthodox arguments quite readily, calling them 'grammatical scruples'. The only argument he uses in order to substantiate this charge is that Revelation 22:1 undermines the validity of this Orthodox interpretation.[655] As we shall see below, this argument is quite speculative and bears very little weight.

On the other hand, we have to point out that this text uses the verb 'proceeds' in the present tense, which indicates a continuous action. In this respect, the verb 'stands in contrast with the words used to describe the eternal generation of the Son, all of which suggest a completed action'. At the same time, we have to admit that it is difficult to assess how much we can make of this fact.[656]

Catholic commentators use two other texts in order to establish their belief that the biblical record warrants, at least implicitly, the truth of *filioque*. These are: John 16:14–15: 'He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare *it* to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare *it* to you' (*NKJV*) and John 20:22: 'He breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit"' (*NKJV*). As in previous cases, a conclusion about the dynamics of the immanent Trinity is inferred from these passages whose explicit reference is to the realm of the divine economy.

De Margerie suggests that these Johannine texts 'acquire their full meaning and unveil the procession of the Spirit if we shed on them the additional light of John 10:30: "The Father and I are one". They are also one, the Father and the Son, in the fact that the two of them as one send the Holy Spirit, and that he proceeds from both of them as from a single principle'.[657] Yet it seems to us that in order to be able to draw such a conclusion from that verse, one has to be already convinced of the truth of *filioque*.

We need to add here one final text, Revelation 21:2: 'And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the

[655] Margerie, *Christian Trinity*, 162.

[656] Bray, 'Double Procession', 417.

[657] Margerie, *Christian Trinity*, 171.

Lamb' (*NKJV*). Read in conjunction with other biblical passages such as Ezekiel 36:25–26 and 1 John 5:5–6, the river may be interpreted as symbolising the Holy Spirit, flowing from God (the Father) and (Christ) the Lamb. In relation to the use of this text in order to justify *filioque*, Congar admits that 'we are clearly still concerned with the economy here, although now at the stage of the eternal fulfilment'. This leads the author to conclude that 'Scripture, as strictly limited to the New Testament, does not therefore do away with the problem'.[658]

One important observation made by Thompson in the context of the *filioque* debate is that 'the Spirit given to Jesus pertains in the first instance to his humanity'.[659] If this observation is correct, and we believe it is, then we have here a reality that warns us against a direct unqualified transfer of the dynamics between the divine persons during Christ's earthly ministry, to the realm of the immanent Trinity.

Another biblical argument brought by western theologians in favour of *filioque* is related to the implications of the titles given to the Spirit in the New Testament. Thus he is called 'the Spirit of Jesus' (Acts 16:7), 'the Spirit of the Son' (Gal. 4:6), 'the Spirit of the Lord' (2 Cor. 3:17), 'the Spirit of Jesus Christ' (Phil. 1:19) and 'the Spirit of Christ' (1 Pet. 1:11). In the light of these titles, Dulles argues that the doctrine of *filioque* must be correct, because 'it is not enough to declare that the Son sent the Spirit, as most monopatrists do, since it must be explained how the Son gets the power to send the Spirit as his own'. But, one may ask, does this conclusion flow necessarily from these titles? We believe, with Needham, that, on the contrary,

> …these phrases… prove nothing of the sort. Surely, the Holy Spirit could very properly be called 'Spirit of Christ' and 'Spirit of the Son' because the Spirit rested on the Son, abiding in him. …there are two ways in which one thing could belong to another: by original possession and by being bestowed… If the economic Trinity is truly grounded in the ontological Trinity, could we not say that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of the Father by original possession, and the Spirit of the Son by an eternal proceeding of the Spirit to the Son from the Father so that from all eternity

[658] Congar, *Holy Spirit*, 3:50.

[659] Thompson, *Modern Trinitarian Perspectives*, 154.

> the Spirit rests on the Son and abides in him – that the Son is the eternal abode, the timeless holy temple, of his Father's Spirit?[660]

In order to strengthen his filioquist argument by invoking a Protestant voice, Dulles argues, in a similar manner to Barth[661] and Mascall,[662] that 'the temporal truth must have an eternal ground' and that 'God cannot manifest himself in his historical action as anything different from that which He is antecedently in himself'.[663] We could hardly agree more with Dulles and Barth on the legitimacy of this principle, which is also expressed in the first part of 'Rahner's Rule'. Yet it remains debatable to what extent the application of this principle would lead, inevitably, to the conclusion that *filioque* is true. Thompson rightly suggests that '*filioque* must be argued on a less logical, more theological basis in revelation'.[664]

There is no doubt that, as the report of the British Council of Churches recommends, 'if, then, the doctrine of the immanent trinity is to be true to Scripture, it is reasonable to conclude that any teaching about the immanent trinity should take due account of Son and Spirit in the economy'.[665] However, as we have already established, the transfer from the level of the economy to that of the divine relations in the immanent trinity should be done in a discerning manner and on strict exegetical grounds. We agree with Ritschl that according to the New Testament the Spirit 'precedes the coming of Christ, is active throughout his life, and is also sent by him to the believers. This chain of observations suggests that it would be insufficient and perhaps illegitimate to "read back" into the Trinity only those New Testament passages which refer to the sending of the Spirit by Jesus'.[666]

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[660] Needham, 155.

[661] Barth, *Church Dogmatics*, I:1:548. For an analysis of Barth's pneumatology, see T. A. Smail, 'The Doctrine of the Holy Spirit', in J. Thompson (ed.), *Theology Beyond Christendom* (Allison Park, Penn.: Pickwick, 1986) 87–109. Smail explains that the Christological centre of Barth's theology predisposes him to conceive of the work of the Spirit in a one-way dependence on Christ. As a result, Barth tends 'to subordinate the Spirit to the Son' and his pneumatology is in danger of being merged into Christology' p.107–108.

[662] E. L. Mascall, *The Triune God. An Ecumenical Study* (Worthing: Churchman, 1986) 66–68.

[663] Dulles, '*Filioque*', 39.

[664] Thompson, *Modern Trinitarian Perspectives*, 153.

[665] *Forgotten Trinity*, 1:33–34.

[666] D. Ritschl, 'Historical Development and Implications of the *Filioque* Controversy', in *Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ*, Faith and Order Paper No. 103 (London: SPCK and Geneva: WCC, 1981), as quoted in LaCugna and McDonnell, 'Returning from "the Far Country"', 206–207.

In conclusion, we have seen that the two traditions interpret the relevant biblical data very differently, reflecting their differing presuppositions, theological paradigms and the concrete conditions to which they were responding. Secondly, we have argued that the New Testament passages that deal with the relationships between the Son and the Spirit are concerned with Christ incarnate, particularly with his humanity, and with the economy of grace. Thus, in order to clarify the matter of the different identities of the Son and of the Spirit in the immanent Trinity, theologians need to have recourse to arguments of a different kind. This is exactly what the theological schools in the west and the east have tried to do, albeit in very different manners.

7.3 A Short Historical Background to Filioque

Dulles provides a very useful historical sketch of the theological and ecclesiastical developments which cluster around the concept of *filioque*. We can also find other helpful pointers towards understanding the historical background around this debate in most serious treatments of the subject under discussion. We will give here only the key events in this complicated history.

- 381 – Council of Constantinople – formulation of the Nicaeo-Constantinopolitan Creed, without the *filioque* clause (the text is found in the proceedings of the Council of Chalcedon, in 451).
- before 451 – the doctrine of the dual procession of the Spirit (from the Father *and the Son – filioque*) was taught by such western Fathers as Tertullian, Hilary, Marius Victorinus, Augustine and Leo the Great.
- 589 – Third Council of Toledo – insertion of *filioque* into the Nicene Creed, in spite of the strong opposition of the eastern Church – first in Spain,[667] and then in England and Gaul, against Arians[668] and Priscillians,[669] in order to underline

[667] Congar (*Holy Spirit*, 3:63) comments that *filioque* was probably added to the creed during the last decade of the sixth century and, more importantly, he suggests that 'it was accepted in good faith that it came from Nicaea-Constantinople'. This is the only plausible explanation he finds for the fact that Latins (*Libri Carolini*, 790) accused the Greeks of suppressing the term *filioque* in the creed. Another reasonable explanation could have been simple malevolence, but we cannot expect a Catholic to presuppose that in his own tradition.

[668] According to Congar (*Holy Spirit*, 3:51), their error consisted in that they' regarded the Spirit as a creation of the Son, who, they believed, was himself created'.

the perfect equality and consubstantiality between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

- 7th century – eastern Fathers, although aware of the use of *filioque* in the west, did not appear to consider it heretical; thus, according to Dulles, Maximus the Confessor, 'defended it as a legitimate variation of the eastern formula that the Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son'.[670]
- 809 – Council of Aachen – ordered the solemn chanting of the creed with the *filioque*, throughout the Holy Roman Empire, in spite of the opposition of the popes, who, although defending the orthodoxy of the double procession of the Spirit against the eastern objections, refused to have the creed with *filioque* sung in the mass, in order to avoid alienating the eastern Church.
- 867 – The so-called 'Photian schism' – Encyclical letter of Patriarch Photius of Constantinople to the other eastern patriarchs, condemning *filioque* as heretical and excommunicating the pope, who had already excommunicated Photius in 863[671]; Photius then formulated the doctrine of the procession of the Spirit from the Father *alone* ('monopatrism') in his influential work *Treatise on the Mystagogia of the Holy Spirit*.[672]

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669 Priscillian argued that Christ did not have a real human nature. See M. Simonetti, 'Priscillien – Priscillianisme', in A. Di Berardino (ed.), *Dictionnaire encyclopédiques du Christianisme ancien* (Paris: Cerf, 1990) 2:2107–2108. Congar (*Holy Spirit*, 3:51) adds that they 'they combined the figures of the Trinity in a single person'.

670 Maximus the Confessor, 'Letter to the Cypriot Marinus', AD 655, in *Op. Th. et Pol., PG* 91:136, quoted by Dulles, '*Filioque*', 32. Congar (*Holy Spirit*, 3:53) suggests Maximus believed that the Spirit proceeds from the Father *through* the Logos, more precisely 'ineffably from the Father and consubstantially from the Son'. Besides the text mentioned above, he also quotes in support of his conclusion Maximus, *Quaestiones et dubia, Interr*., XXXIV (*PG* 90, 813B) and *Quaestiones ad Thalassium*, LXIII (*PG* 90, 672C).

671 Needham, '*Filioque*', 150–151, suggests that an important role in this debate was played by 'the intensely personal conflict' between Pope Nicholas I and Photius, over 'the passionate rivalry between western and eastern missionaries in Bulgaria', that 'came close to open war'.

672 Saint Photios, *The Mystagogy of the Holy Spirit*, tr. J. P. Farrell (Brookline, N.Y., Holy Cross, 1987). Congar, *Holy Spirit*, 3:59, contends that: 'it cannot be denied that the teaching of the Fathers and of John Damascene was narrowed down and hardened in the theology of Photius'. Bulgakov – *Le Paraclet* (Paris, 1946) 110 – appears to agree with him when he points out that 'there is no unanimous and homogenous patristic doctrine of the procession of the Holy Spirit'. In spite of this, the Catholic theologian mentioned above rightly concludes that 'we must however take Photius' arguments seriously – the more so because the Greek Church has taken over his theology – without at the same time losing sight of those Fathers whose work Photius himself tended to leave aside'.

- 1014 – Pope Benedict VIII appears to have introduced *filioque* into the Roman liturgy for the coronation of Emperor Henry II, at the emperor's express request.
- 1054 – Great Schism – the inclusion of *filioque* in the creed (without the agreement of an ecumenical council)[673] in the west, and the fierce Photian campaign to declare it heretical, paved the way for the reciprocal anathemas issued by Patriarch Michael Caerularius of Constantinople and the papal legate Humbert of Silva Candida, which set the seal on the official separation of the Christian east and west.
- 1215 – Fourth Lateran Council – affirmed the *filioque* in the creed and in Peter Lombard's defence of the trinitarian doctrine against Abbot Joachim.[674]
- 1274 – Second Council of Lyons – insisted on the *filioque* in its Profession of Faith for the eastern Emperor Michael Paleologus VIII, explaining, in an attempt to meet some eastern objections, that the Spirit proceeds not from two principles, but from the Father and the Son as one principle.[675]
- 1439 – Council of Florence – a fragile agreement was achieved with the Greek delegation according to which the western formula 'from the Father *and* the Son' and the eastern one, 'from the Father *through* the Son' were recognized as equivalent; unfortunately, the accord was never accepted in Constantinople, which soon fell to the Turks (1453).

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[673] Bray, 'Double Procession', 420, states that with the argument over *filioque*, because it had not been agreed in an ecumenical council, 'we have moved from the question of truth to that of property', i.e. the right of the pope or of the council to decide on dogma. The author may be right, but this is no argument against the Orthodox indictment, because not only was *filioque* introduced into the creed outside of any conciliar process, but in fact the introduction was done more or less as an act of enmity towards the east. No matter how we describe this, whether as a matter of truth or one of authority, the lack of ecumenical courtesy in the process is undeniable.

[674] In relation to such scholastic developments of the doctrine of *filioque*, Needham, 151, argues that these 'made the gulf over the *filioque* still deeper, as the great schoolmen, notably Aquinas, refined the arguments for the *filioque* clause to new levels of subtlety and sophistication'.

[675] Moltmann explains that 'there has never been any question about two sources for the Godhead. Consequently, the *filioque* could also be interpreted as *per filium*. The *filioque* was never directed against the "monarchy" of the Father'– *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 182.

- 16th century – Reformation – *filioque* was not part of the dispute between the Reformers and the Catholics; it was accepted without discussion, 'lock stock and barrel', by all branches of the Reformation.[676]
- 1875 – the question of *filioque* was raised again in the context of the attempt at reconciliation with the Orthodox made by the Old Catholics; while affirming that the doctrine in itself was admissible as a theological opinion, they conceded that *filioque* had been added to the creed in an illegitimate manner.
- 1978 – Lambeth Conference of the Anglican Church – following the ecumenical dialogue with the Orthodox, recommended the elimination of *filioque* from the creed, but the proposal was never accepted by the Anglican community.
- 1979 and 1990 – the World Council of Churches, through its Faith and Order Commission recommended that the creed should be restored to its initial formulation, without the *filioque*, and encouraged Christians to confess it together in this way.
- Today – Dulles mentions that the *filioque* is presently under discussion within the Catholic Church and suggests that there are only four possible solutions to this highly divisive issue.[677]

(1) The most rigid option would be for Catholics to make acceptance of the *filioque* a *sine qua non* for full ecclesial communion. In our opinion, if this were to happen, the desired healing of the rift between the Christian east and west would become a practical impossibility, given the extremely sensitive nature of this issue for the Orthodox. The same would be true, probably, if the Orthodox were to insist in a rigid and exclusive way on the unreserved acceptance by the Catholics of the 'monopatrist' position (the procession of the Spirit from the Father *alone*).

(2) The middle ground solution for the Catholics would be for the two churches to agree on two alternative and equally valid formulations on the procession of the Spirit,

[676] Needham, 152, suggests that this surprising phenomenon may be explained through 'the Reformers' loyalty to Augustine, who was the fountainhead of Filioquism'. The author adds that 'this Protestant acceptance of Filioquism has remained the case to the present day; with rare exceptions'. Among these, Needham mentions the Baptist theologians J. P. Boice, R. L. Dabney and A. H. Strong, as well as the Anglican J. C. Ryle.

[677] Dulles, '*Filioque*', 34.

together with the freedom to use any one in reciting the creed.[678] Inclining towards this solution, De Margerie, following the decisions of the magisterium, argues that

> …in accepting *filioque* on the doctrinal level and in recognizing its legitimate and necessary insertion into the symbol, the Church does not intend to impose it on eastern rite Catholics [and consequently, even less, on the Eastern Orthodox] in the chanting of the symbol, but only insists that they profess faith in it and recognize this legitimacy of its insertion'.[679]

From this perspective, both the formulation of procession 'from the Father *and* the Son' and the one which argues that it is 'of the Father *through* the Son', would be equally valid and complementary, approaching the same reality from two different angles.[680] The advantage of the formula 'through the Son' is that it appears to better preserve the 'monarchy' of the Father. Augustine himself, 'while preferring the *filioque*, concedes that the Spirit proceeds "principally" (*principaliter*) from the Father, in the sense that the Father alone is the underived source (*principium sine principio*) whereas the Son is the derived source (*principium principatum*).[681] It would be quite difficult to find any Orthodox who would be inclined to accept this compromise solution.

(3) A more acceptable option, at least from the moderate Orthodox point of view, would be for the Catholics to eliminate *filioque* and to revert to the initial formulation of the Nicaeo-Constantinopolitan Creed.[682] Yet, if this were interpreted to mean that the Spirit proceeds from the Father *alone*, as Photius and his followers insisted should be done, then this would be no solution at all, because it is not only unacceptable to the

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[678] This is the solution favoured by Dulles, '*Filioque'*, 44, who suggests that 'the toleration of different wording in the eastern and western churches seems… ecumenically appropriate at the present time. The one faith may be expressed in different formulations that are compatible and mutually complementary'.

[679] Margerie, Christian Trinity, 168, based on the Bull *Etsi pastoralis* of Pope Benedict XIV, in 1742.

[680] Moltmann suggests another solution. The formula he prefers (which is not original) is 'the Holy Spirit who proceeds from the Father of the Son' – *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 185.

[681] Augustine, *De Trinitate*, 15:17:29. Dulles, 40–41, argues that both Maximus the Confessor and Thomas Aquinas would agree with this option, which was also the compromise solution suggested by the Council of Florence. Ware also comments that 'when Augustine stated that the Spirit proceeds from both Father and Son, he was careful to qualify this by insisting that the Spirit does not proceed from the Son in the same manner as He proceeds from the Father. These are two different kinds of procession' – T. Ware, *The Orthodox Church* (London: Penguin, 1993[2]) 216. While this may be true of Augustine, we do not believe it fits the insistence of some Catholic theologians on the synonymity of the concepts of 'procession' and 'sending'.

[682] This appears to be the solution favoured by Moltmann, although he suggests that it should be supplemented by a 'common discussion on the Trinity… The one is impossible without the other' – *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 181.

Catholics, but also completely insensitive to the theological challenges that made the western church adopt the *filioque*. Moreover, the insistence that the Catholics should renounce the doctrine of *filioque* as a condition for re-establishing ecclesial *koinonia* would imply that the Christian East was turning its trinitarian model 'from an icon into a replica'.[683] Congar is categorically in favour of the suppression of *filioque*, which, he admits, was inserted in the creed 'in a canonically irregular way'.[684] He considers that such a deletion would be a gesture of humility and brotherhood on the part of the Roman Catholic Church which might have wide-reaching ecumenical implications'. However, for that to be possible, *filioque*, correctly understood, would have to be accepted by the Orthodox as an 'equivalent' and 'complementary' dogmatic expression of the procession of the Spirit. And everything would have to be done 'in the light, in patience, with respect for each other's legitimate sensibilities, and in love'.[685]

(4) If the two churches could agree that the creed should be recited without the *filioque* both in the east and in the west, while the two interpretations of the procession of the Spirit would be considered complementary, then we might be able to envisage a solution to this centuries-old dispute. Yet this could not be achieved 'in the absence of a solemn and binding declaration from the eastern Churches that they accepted the orthodoxy of the *filioque*'.[686] We tend to believe that this solution is not completely impossible, although it would require great humility from the Catholics and much more flexibility on the part of the Orthodox.[687]

According to the progressive Orthodox ecumenist Stylianopoulos, two factors are essential for the settlement of the *filioque* dispute: (1) 'recognition that the theological use of the *filioque* in the west against Arian subordinationism is fully valid

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[683] LaCugna and McDonnell, 'Returning from "the Far Country"', 209.

[684] Congar. *Holy Spirit*, 3:214. LaCugna expresses the same position, 'Problems', 336, as does Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1:318, n. 181.

[685] Congar, *Holy Spirit*, 3: 206.

[686] Dulles, '*Filioque'*, 43. The author also argues that the deletion of the *filioque* from the creed 'would obscure the intimate connection between the immanent and the economic Trinity'. Besides the fact that this argument was never part of the initial reasoning for the introduction of the *filioque*, it seems to us that it is overly scrupulous, if not somewhat excessive. There are certainly other better constructed and much more effective ways of stressing this connection.

[687] Ironically, these two requirements, humility for the Catholics and flexibility for the Orthodox, are most difficult to find in these traditions. Nevertheless, an encouraging sign for a possible agreement is the recent document 'The *Filioque*: A Church-Dividing Issue? An Agreed Statement of the North American Orthodox-Catholic Theological Consultation', St. Paul's College, Washington, DC, October 25, 2003.

according to the theological criteria of the eastern tradition';[688] and (2) 'recognition that biblical and patristic theology commonly affirm the teaching of the "monarchy" of the Father'.[689]

In any case, before taking any hasty steps towards a solution, theologians would do well to heed the solemn warning formulated by Garrigues:

> Tout triomphalisme confessionel unilatéral, qui ne voudrait pas tenir compte de la subtile complexité de la Tradition conciliaire et patristique touchant à ce mystère de l'Esprit Saint, conduirait, en sense inverse mais aussi sûrrement dans l'impasse des unions avortées qui ont jalonné la malheureuse histoire des deux Eglises soeurs. Le dialogue théologique au sujet de l'Esprit 'qui répand l'amour de Dieu dans nos coeurs'(Rom 5:8) ne peut lui-même se passer d'amour pour 'être conduit par l'Esprit vers la vérité tout entière' (Jn 16:13).[690]

One may reasonably ask why it is important to discuss this issue in such depth. Our answer is that *filioque* is not simply a speculative theological conundrum. It represents, together with the nature of the papal primacy, one of the two key reasons for the separation between the Orthodox and the Catholic Churches,[691] and, as such, implicitly a very serious ecclesiological problem that affects both churches (and to a certain extent Protestantism also) at more than one level[692] in the working out of their ecclesiality.

As we have been able to observe from the biblical data and from historical treatments of this subject, the issue of the legitimacy of *filioque* cannot be decided on

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[688] T. Stylianopoulos, 'The *Filioque*: Dogma, Theologoumenon or Error?' in T. Stylianopoulos and S. M. Heim (eds.), *Spirit of Truth. Ecumenical Perspectives on the Holy Spirit* (Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross, 1986) 57. The author argues that all the truths that *filioque* was used to stress: (1) the consubstantial unity of the Trinity; (2) the divinity of the Son; and (3) the intimacy between the Son and the Spirit are 'integral elements of Eastern trinitarian theology anchored on the Cappadocian teaching of περιχώρησις'.

[689] Stylianopoulos, '*Filioque*', 57.

[690] J.-M. Garrigues, 'Réflexions d'un théologien catholique sur le *filioque*', in *La signification et l'actualité du IIe Concile Oecumenique pour le monde chrétien d'aujourd'hui* (Chambesy–Genève: Editions du Centre Orthodoxe du Patriarchat Oecumenique, 1982) 298.

[691] For Lossky (*The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, published in English in 1957) *filioque* is in fact the primary reason for the Great Schism and, implicitly, the essential problem that needs to be resolved in order to heal the separation between the Christian east and west.

[692] It is very reasonable to believe that 'the problem of *filioque* will not be entirely solved until agreement is also reached on the implications of pneumatological doctrine regarding the structures of the Church and the papal primacy' – G. H. Tavard, 'A Clarification on *Filioque*?', *Anglican Theological Review*, 83, 3, 2001, 514.

purely biblical grounds and the history of the concept has only complicated matters. This is the reason why the issue needs to be dealt with theologically. We will do so in this chapter, giving priority to Staniloae's understanding of this doctrine and setting it in the context of the relevant Catholic-Orthodox dialogue. However, before analysing the way in which Staniloae approaches the dispute around the *filioque* clause, it is important to set the discussion in its proper context, by briefly presenting the issue, important for Staniloae, of the threeness in the Godhead, as a condition for communion between the divine persons.

7.4 The Threeness as Condition for Communion within the Godhead

Staniloae believes that the number three represents *par excellence* 'distinction in unity or unity made explicit'. He explains that a unique subject would lack the joy and consequently the meaning of existence. Even in the presence of an object which cannot be conceived other than as its complementary that unique subject would experience a sort of loneliness that is unfitting for the implicit perfection of the Divine.

The existence of two subjects brings with it real complementarity and 'a dialogical dimension based on the unity of being'. However, the author considers this an insufficient condition for the Godhead, because although the two open themselves up to one another, they also close themselves off into what he calls 'a loneliness *a deux*'. Only a third, argues Staniloae, can deliver the two subjects from the potential selfishness of their relation, becoming the real test of their love. 'Only because a third exists can the two become simultaneously one' and enjoy perfect communion,[693] an argument that is very similar to one formulated centuries earlier by Richard of St. Victor.[694]

At this point, someone might ask, what about a fourth divine person? Would that be a plausible hypothesis? Staniloae says that it would not 'because a fourth in God would disperse and limit the third and diminish his importance. The existence of a

[693] Staniloae, *EG, 1:*266–267.

[694] *De Trinitate*, 3.xix. Staniloae does not signal if he is aware of St. Victor's argument on this point.

fourth would mean that the whole of the objective horizon in which the two are found is no longer concentrated within a person'.[695]

In this speculative line of reasoning Staniloae appears to be combining insights from existentialist and personalist philosophy with arguments formulated some time before him by the Russian lay theologian, Pavel Florensky.[696] As in Florensky's case, this kind of emphasis on numbers in the Godhead runs the risk of reducing plurality in the divine to an issue of arithmetic. The same holds true for the practice of searching for threeness in the natural order, as alleged 'marks of the creator'. However, as Gunton rightly points out, 'mathematics is not the game, but rather to seek ways in which the structure (*taxis*) of relations in God is reflected in the world'.[697]

A much more solid approach to the issue of plurality in unity within the divine is afforded to the theologian by the discussion of issues such as relations of origin, subsistent relations, divine persons vs. divine essence, and, implicitly, *filioque*, which will be the object of our inquiry in the rest of this chapter.

7.5 Filioque *and the Distinctions between the Divine Persons*

From the development of ideas in the previous sections we can easily understand the vital importance of the third person for the inner dynamic of the Trinity. It is not surprising then that so much debate has surrounded the issue of the procession of the Holy Spirit, which although it is not the only significant obstacle is surely one of the most important stumbling blocks in the dialogue between the western and the eastern Churches.

7.5.1 Augustine and the Catholic formulation of filioque

There is very little doubt that Augustine was the originator of what the Eastern Orthodox call 'Filioquism'.[698] According to Lossky, patristic theology before Augustine conceived of the unity of the Godhead hypostatically, in terms of the person of the

[695] Staniloae, *EG, 1:*270. Again, Staniloae is echoing St. Victor at this point, once more without giving the source of his inspiration. We are unaware of the reason for this absence and prefer not to speculate.

[696] P. Florenski, *Stalpul şi temelia adevarului* (Iasi: Polirom, 1999) 37–38. English title: *The Pillar and the Foundation of Truth* (Princeton: Princeton University Pres, 1997).

[697] Gunton, *The One*, 167–168.

[698] Needham, 142–143.

Father,[699] while Augustine shifted the emphasis of the debate by defining divine unity in non-hypostatic and rather substantialist terms ('there is one God because there is one divine essence').[700] Gunton has formulated an incisive critique of Augustine's trinitarianism. As Thomson aptly summarises, Gunton finds Augustine's triadology problematic in at least four areas: 'his weakness in understanding the humanity of Christ and so of the incarnation, the inadequacy of his interpretation of substance and persons, his use of analogy, and the nature of the Holy Spirit'.[701] In what follows we will comment succinctly on some of these weaknesses.

It is not only pre-Augustinian theology, whether eastern or western, but also even classic and contemporary Catholic theology which accepts and affirms the idea that the Father is *fons deitatis*.[702] Thus a local council at Toledo proclaims the Father as 'source and origin of the whole divinity', a statement that was repeatedly promulgated in the documents of the magisterium.[703] Unquestionably, this did not imply 'an ontological subordination of essence, [that would have been heresy] but a relational subordination of persons'.[704]

There is however another source for the differences between the eastern Fathers and Augustine. In the Christian east, the question of the tri-unity of God was closely connected to the incarnation and in general to the economy of salvation. As such, it was profoundly Christological and centred on the concept of person. In contrast to this, Augustine's approach, although not exclusively theoretical but thoroughly experiential, was much more 'the logical conclusion of a Neo-Platonism applied to a deep reflection about faith before being converted'.[705] Even as sympathetic a commentator as Lancaster

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[699] See for instance Gregory of Nazianzus, *Or*. XXXI, 14.

[700] According to V. Lossky, *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church* (London: Clarke, 1957) ch. 3, especially p. 58.

[701] Thompson, *Modern Trinitarian Perspectives*, 129.

[702] We have to be fair with Augustine and admit, with Kallistos, that he 'was never a "Filioquist" in any unqualified sense, for like the Cappadocians he regarded the Father as the *principium*, the ultimate source and origin of being within the Godhead' – Kallistos, 'Human Person', 9.

[703] Margerie, *Christian Trinity*, `48. See also Y. Congar, 'The Father, the Absolute Source of Divinity', in Congar, *Holy Spirit*, 3:133–143. According to him, besides Augustine, Albert the Great and especially Bonaventure were promoters of this idea, following in the footsteps of Pseudo-Dionysius (*De div. nom.* II, 7, *PG* 3, 645B).

[704] Needham, 143.

[705] Congar, *Holy Spirit*, 3:83.

admits that in his effort to 'purify the mind and raise it, to the fullest extent possible in human understanding, to the vision of God' Augustine attempted to 'move beyond logical arguments and even temporal images'.[706] This may indeed be a commendable desire. Nevertheless, in his Platonistic zeal, Augustine went too far, demonstrating his desire 'to move beyond temporal understanding of God' by excluding even the 'temporal salvation history' from his reflection effort,[707] with disastrous results for his theology and that of his followers.

At this point a new question had to be asked. If both the Son and the Spirit received their nature from the being of the Father, what made the three divine persons each have their own distinctive identity? Augustine's answer was that the Father was uncaused, the Son was caused by the Father, and the Spirit was caused jointly by the Father and the Son (*filioque*). In other words, the divine persons were distinguished from each other by their relations of origin and the opposition of their relationship.[708] This conclusion was based on the general principle according to which 'in God, everything is common, apart from what is distinguished by an opposition in relationship'.[709]

This formulation, however, introduced a supplementary difficulty, of which Augustine was very conscious. This was that the reasoning did not work in the same manner where the Holy Spirit was concerned, for, as Augustine explains, 'we speak of the Holy Spirit of the Son, but not of the Son of the Holy Spirit'. In order to solve this difficulty, Augustine postulates that 'in order to have a reciprocal correspondence in this case, we must speak of the gift of the giver or the giver of the gift'.[710]

The major difference between the eastern Fathers and Augustine was that in eastern theology the specific identity of the other two persons in the Trinity came from the fact that the Son was generated (Gr. *proienai*) eternally by the Father, while the

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[706] Lancaster, 339.

[707] Lancaster, 345.

[708] Augustine, *De Trinitate*, 15:27:48, quoted by Needham, 146–147. Opposition in this context means that the persons and the roles of the Father and Son are correlative.

[709] Congar, *Holy Spirit*, 3:202. Roberson (*CROE*, 18, n. 9) explains that the concept of *relationis oppositio* was introduced in the *Decree for the Jacobites* at the Council of Florence.

[710] Augustine, *De Trinitate*, V, 12, 13. Augustine does not seem to be troubled by the fact that Scripture never brings together the Father and the Son under the common term of 'giver'. This logical device suits his purposes and that is enough for him.

Spirit proceeded (Gr. *ekporeuesthai*) from the Father. According to Congar, 'in Latin dogmatic theology… hypostases are really identical with the divine essence', while in Orthodox theology 'a hypostasis cannot… come from a common nature – a hypostasis can come only from a hypostasis'.[711]

Although the difference between 'generation' and 'procession' remains a mystery, because it has not been clearly revealed to us in the biblical record, and, according to the eastern Fathers had to be kept at the level of mystery and away from any theological speculation, they insisted that generation and procession were two different processes, resulting in different identities. For Augustine however, who was not particularly well versed in Greek, as well as for other western Fathers, there was no significant difference between generation and procession, both terms being rendered in Latin as *processio*.[712] As a result, for Augustine, the task of distinguishing between the identities of the Son and the Spirit was still unaccomplished. This prompted him to take the step of grounding the unity of the Godhead in the divine essence, rather than in the person of the Father, as well as postulating the procession of the Spirit from the Father and the Son, as from a single principle.

Starting from this doubtful presupposition of the similarity between generation and procession, western theology in general concluded that, if *filioque* were not true, then there would be no distinction between the identities of the Son and of the Spirit,[713] these both being rooted in their relation of origin with the Father. From this, Bray, echoing the typical Catholic argument, takes a further step, as unconvincing to us as the first one. He suggests that by rejecting *filioque* eastern theology runs the risk of 'allowing access to the Father by the Spirit, without taking the Son or his work into account'. As confirmation of his argument, he gives the example of the teaching given

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[711] Congar, *Holy Spirit*, 3:72–73.

[712] Congar (*Holy Spirit*, 3:88) explains that the Latin word *procedere* means literally, in general terms, 'the fact of coming from another' and 'therefore includes the sense of the Greek *ekporeusis*, but does not express the shade of meaning given to this word as a procession from an original and absolute principle'. The same author adds in a different passage (*Holy Spirit*, 3:199) that 'there is a difference in content in the terms *ekporeuesthai* (*ekporeusis*) and *procedere* (*processio*). The fact that this difference was not observed early enough is at the origin of two parallel but not wholly corresponding movements in the two traditions

[713] See also Bray, 'Double Procession', 420: 'without the double procession it is hard to say what the relationship between the Son and the Holy Spirit is'.

in some charismatic circles that 'effectively sidelines Christ in precisely this way'.[714] A similar conviction, stated positively this time, appears to underline one of the conclusions formulated by the ecumenical meetings at Klingenthal (1978 and 1979), which declares:

> ..on peut prétendre que le *Filioque* souligne que le Saint Esprit n'est autre que l'Esprit de Jésus Christ; que cette approche du Saint Esprit est au cœur du témoignage du Nouveau Testament; et que le *Filioque* constitue un indispensable bouclier contre les dangers d'un 'enthousiasme charismatique' non contrôlé Christologiquement, danger dont les Eglises d'aujourd'hui doivent se garder.[715]

However, what Bray and the Klingenthal participants appear to forget is that, firstly, Orthodoxy has been left virtually untouched by most charismatic manifestations (in the contemporary sense of the word) and secondly, in fact filioquism in the west has not been able to protect either Catholicism or Protestantism from such Christological deficiencies.[716]

A similar argument is formulated by de Margerie, who contends that what he calls the 'Photian heresy', which professes the procession of the Spirit from the Father *alone*, practically denies 'the immediate and direct unity of the Holy Spirit with the Son, which can only be a relation of origin'.[717] Orthodox theology rejects this conclusion, arguing, as Congar rightly points out, that from an eastern perspective 'the relationships are not what define the persons – they follow and are constituted by the persons, like inseparable properties'.[718] It is interesting to observe Rahner's comments on the same topic. He states: 'it has not been proved that a relationship that is peculiar to a person and a relationship that results in the constitution of a person are necessarily the same'.[719]

In his elaboration of this doctrine Augustine started from certain data of the revelation. Nevertheless, as even Catholic exegetes admit, these were clearly related to the divine economy (particularly Jn. 15:26) and Augustine extended them, rather

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[714] Bray, 'Double Procession', 419.

[715] Conseil Œcuménique des Eglises, *La théologie du Saint Esprit dans le dialogue œcuménique. Document Foi et constitution, no. 103* (Paris: Centurion, 1981), 23.

[716] See also Needham, '*Filioque*', 160.

[717] Margerie, *Christian Trinity*, 172.

[718] Congar, *Holy Spirit*, 2:73.

[719] K. Rahner, *Mysterium Salutis. Dogmatique de l'histoire du salut*, 14 vols. (Paris: Cerf, 1971) 1:33.

carelessly, we would contend, from an exegetical point of view, to the realm of the immanent Trinity. The typical Augustinian argument for the double procession of the Spirit[720] runs something like this: The relationships between Father, Son and Holy Spirit in economy (the history of salvation) reveal to us and are reflective of the relationships existing eternally in the immanent Trinity. Up to this point no Orthodox Christian would really want to deny anything. But then, adds the Augustinian argument, in the economy of salvation, Christ is the one who bestows the Spirit on his disciples. Thus, it follows that in eternity the Spirit comes not just from the Father, but also from Christ.

No presentation of Augustinian pneumatology, especially as it pertains to *filioque*, would be complete without a mention of his understanding of the Holy Spirit as communion and source of communion within the Trinity. Even though Augustine was not the one who formulated this position, he was the very first to elaborate the doctrine of the Spirit as the bond of love between the Father and the Son. Yet, not everybody is happy with this perspective. As we shall see, Staniloae[721] was very ready to point out to the depersonalising effect of this understanding for the identity of the Spirit,[722] as have been Pannenberg[723] and Moltmann.[724]

Gunton points to at least three key elements missing from Augustine's pneumatology. First, it completely lacks the essential eschatological dimension of the work of the Spirit, a deficiency which Gunton describes as 'one of his worst legacies to the western tradition'. Secondly, what is also missing is 'a conception of the Spirit as realising the conditions of the age to come particularly through the creation of community'. Thirdly, 'there seems to be little weight given in Augustine's treatment of the Trinity to a notion of love derived from the economy of the incarnation. There, the essence of the love of God is its outgoingness: its dynamic seeking of the other'. As a result, because of an inadequate rootedness in the economy of salvation, Augustine

[720] For an in-depth favourable analysis of the Augustinian doctrine of the double procession, see D. J. Nodes, 'Dual Processions of the Holy Spirit: Development of a Theological Tradition', *SJT*, 52, 1, 1999, 1–18.

[721] Staniloae, *EG, 1:*272.

[722] Even as subtle an Orthodox theologian as Evdokimov risks falling into a similar error when he suggests that the Spirit is 'in the middle of the Father and the Son. He is the one who brings about the communion between the two. He is the communion, the love between the Father and the Son' – *The Art of the Icon. A Theology of Beauty* (Redondo Beach, Ca.: Oakwood, 1990) 254.

[723] Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 1:316.

[724] Moltmann, *Trinity*, 168–170.

'lacks the means to give personal distinctiveness to the being of the Spirit in the inner Trinity'.[725]

In an interesting article, describing his personal theological pilgrimage from the western to the eastern view on the procession of the Spirit, Needham, an Evangelical Protestant, claims that what finally convinced him to adopt the eastern position was 'the connection between the ontological Trinity and the economic Trinity'.[726] This is intriguing, because in fact, as we have already seen, it is this very argument that represents the 'heavy artillery', if we may so call it, of the Catholic arguments for *filioque*. Needham, however, argues that 'in the New Testament Christ bestows the Holy Spirit on his Church for a particular reason: namely, that as Head of the Church, the Father has first bestowed the Spirit on Christ. It is not the case of a common source; it is a case of the Spirit flowing from the Father to the Son'.[727]

For Needham, following the traditional Eastern Orthodox argument, the paradigmatic event illustrating the dynamic of this mystery is Christ's baptism. It is there that the Spirit, 'proceeding' from the Father, comes to find his 'rest' in Christ. Bray argues, however, that 'if the baptism of Jesus is to be taken as a model of the eternal relationship of the Son to both the Father and the Holy Spirit, it raises the specter of adoptionism' since it was exactly this argument for which Paul of Samosata was condemned for heresy at the Council of Antioch.[728] This argument is very weak, as it only points to a potential danger, without proving in any way that this has been actualised in the Orthodox position on the procession of the Spirit.

Needham points to a similar dynamic in Acts: 2:33 where according to Peter's sermon, Jesus, 'being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear'.

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[725] Gunton, 'Augustine', 53–55.

[726] Needham, 154. A similar position is expressed by H. Montefiore, 'And from the Son?', *Theology*, 85, Nov 1982, 417–422. Another Anglican theologian, Craig, has written an article in which, like Needham, he opts for deleting the *filioque* clause from the creed, but only for canonical reasons. Yet, he still holds to the classic western position that the biblical texts which speak about the Son sending of the Spirit not only imply an economic dimension, but also speak of the eternal procession of the Son – W. Craig, 'Does Omitting the *Filioque* Clause Betray Traditional Anglican Thought?', *Anglican Theological Review*, 28, 3, 1996, 438. The same conviction is firmly expressed by J. Thurmer, A *Detection of the Trinity* (Exeter: Paternoster, 1984) 70–73.

[727] Needham, 154.

[728] Bray, 'Double Procession', 422.

From this, Needham concludes that 'the western appeal to the economic Trinity to defend the *filioque* clause is suicidal. It proves the opposite. It establishes the eastern view'.[729] We must confess that, even if this author's conclusion may too easily dismiss and is not dealing sufficiently with all the intricacies of the Catholic argument, his exegesis appears to us more careful and more consistent with the general witness of the biblical record. Thus we share his convictions, rather than those held by the Catholics.[730] The same is true in relation to what the west has considered 'its most crushing rebuttal of the eastern view: namely, that if the Son were not equal with the Father as source of the Spirit, it undermined the full deity of the Son'.[731] If this argument were valid in relation to the deity of the Son then the fact that the Spirit is not equal with the Father in the generation of the Son would undermine the full deity of the Spirit in the same manner.

The Augustinian approach briefly outlined here became the standard for future developments in western trinitarianism which led, in their turn, to the addition of the *filioque* to the Creed.

The decision made by the western Church at the (non-ecumenical) Council of Toledo (589) concerning the addition of the *filioque* clause to the Christian creed was never accepted in the east and finally, along with other, less theological reasons, led to the Great Schism in 1054. Admittedly, the cultural paradigms of the western and eastern Churches were very different.[732] They were also confronted with different challenges and consequently responded to them in distinct manners. It is possible that, to a large degree, we have to do here with significant misunderstanding on both sides. If this can

[729] Needham, 157.

[730] It is for this reason that we have made such extensive use of arguments formulated by Needham.

[731] Needham, 157. The author points out, justifiably we believe, that 'the west's anti-Arian enthusiasm to assert the Son's equality with the Father had unwittingly led to an argument which, if accepted, led logically to the downgrading of the Spirit to a second-class member of the Godhead'. As we shall see below, this is precisely one of the main accusations formulated by Staniloae against the western position on the *filioque*.

[732] One possible explanation of the differences is of a linguistic nature. The Latin term *procedere* translated both the Greek term *ekporeuesthai*, used in John 15:26 of the Holy Spirit's procession from the Father, and *proienai*, used in John 8:42 of Jesus' coming from or being begotten by the Father.

be recognised as being the case, future ecumenical dialogues will have more chances to bring about a historical reconciliation.[733]

7.5.2 Staniloae and the Orthodox perspective on **filioque**

The fact that much of the controversy around *filioque* is based on mutual misunderstanding does not mean that the two conceptions on the procession of the Holy Spirit are unimportant in themselves and in terms of their theological and practical consequences.[734] Alternatively, it is possible that the Orthodox tend to exaggerate them and blame *filioque* for all the weaknesses of western Christianity, the converse western accusation being maintained against the Orthodox.[735]

Much energy is expended by eastern and western theologians to establish their respective cases in relation to *filioque*. Staniloae is no exception, as we can see from the following three statements:

> The fundamental weakness of Latin pneumatology will always consist in its inability to assume explicitly, as much as is possible in the understanding and the language of faith, the inscrutable antinomy between begetting and *ekporeusa* (procession).[736]

> In fact the expressions some Catholic theologians use regarding the Holy Spirit are so ambiguous that it is hard to say any longer whether they consider him a person or not. Others do declare him a person, but their speculations rather suggest the conclusion that he is not.[737]

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[733] This is Bulgakov's conviction. He believes that 'it is possible, in spite of the past, [for the Orthodox and the Catholic Churches] to arrive at a mutual theological understanding on this point' – *The Orthodox Church* (Crestwood, NY: SVSP, 1988) 103.

[734] This is clearly the opinion of A. Richardson, who declares that the *filioque* debate 'was mainly a matter of words and terminology, no vital theological issue being involved' – *Creeds in the making. A Short Introduction to the History of Christian Doctrine* (Philadelphia, 1981) 122, as quoted by J. P. Farrell, 'A Theological Introduction to the Mystagogy of Saint Photios', in Photios, *Mystagogy*, 17

[735] This is also what Needham, 158, believes on this matter.

[736] Staniloae, 'Studii catolice', 480.

[737] Staniloae, *EG, 1:*272. Bray, 'Double Possession', 423, suggests that 'probably very few western theologians would think of the double procession as a factor in the relative depersonalization of the Holy Spirit'. Yet, he admits, 'it would be hard to deny that something of that kind has taken place in our theological perception, whether or not the double procession has anything to do with it'. The same danger appears in the second conclusion of the ecumenical meetings at Klingenthal. It argues that: 'on peut soutenir que le *Filioque* subordonne le Saint Esprit au Christ; qu'il tend de le "dépersonnaliser" comme s'il n'était qu'un simple 'instrument', une 'puissance', et que cette manière de voir peut également

> The full love between Father and Son as identical with the Holy Spirit, an identity of which Catholic theology makes so much, is nothing other than the submersion of the two persons within impersonal being, in a sense that recalls Plotinus or the doctrine of nirvana.[738]

Staniloae begins his definition of the relations between Father, Son and Spirit with the use of two biblical terms: 'rest' (Jn. 1:33) and 'procession' (Jn. 15:26). He understands the 'resting' of the Spirit upon the Son not as the opposite of weariness, 'for the Spirit cannot grow weary, but as an "end to all further departing" as an "abiding" in the Son'. He interprets 'procession' in the same manner, meaning not merely an origination of the Spirit in the Father, but rather a 'setting forth from somewhere towards a definite goal, a departure from one person in order to reach another – *ekporeúomai* = I set out on the way, in order to arrive somewhere'. In other words, the Spirit proceeds from the Father towards the Son in order to rest in him.[739] Staniloae agrees with Gregory of Cyprus that, although described in Scripture in economic terms, this 'rest', reflects a dynamic already manifest in the immanent Trinity, for 'when the Son becomes man, he receives as man what he has as God'.[740]

Although Staniloae appreciates the progress made in the ecumenical dialogue on this issue by the contribution of the Catholic Jean-Michel Garrigues, he insists that the Spirit's procession from the Father *alone* is not an Orthodox *theologoumenon*[741] but an essential 'point of faith' implicit both in the Scriptures and in the teaching of the Church Fathers of the first centuries.[742] That is why it cannot be used of the relation between the

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entraîner une subordination de l'Esprit à l'Eglise – par laquelle l'Eglise elle-même se durcit en devenant une institution autoritaire' – Conseil Oecuménique des Eglises, *Théologie du Saint Esprit*, 24.

738 Staniloae, *EG, 1:*274.

739 In an article published in 1970 Staniloae added that 'the Father causes the Spirit to proceed and gives him the Son as his goal. The Father himself through the Love projected from himself comes to rest upon the Son', Staniloae, 'Sfinta Treime, structura', 100.

740 Staniloae, 'Trinitarian Relations', 21–22.

741 A. Bolotov, 'Thèses sur le "*Filioque*"', *Istina*, 17, 1972, 262–263, defines a *theologoumenon* in the following manner: 'The opinions of the Fathers of the *one* and *undivided* Church are the opinions of those men among whom are found those who have rightly been called *hoi didaskaloi tēs oikoumenēs*… But, widely accepted as it may be, a *theologoumenon* does not constitute a dogma' (quoted in Congar, *Holy Spirit*, 3:66).

742 Staniloae refers here to a paper that Garrigues wrote for the ecumenical gathering at Klingenthal, in 1979. Staniloae, 'Procession', 175.

Spirit and the Son, as Garrigues does.[743] For this procession of the Spirit Staniloae prefers the terms 'going forth' and 'shining forth' understood in an Athanasian sense, according to which the 'sending forth' of the Spirit into the world by the Son describes the temporal aspect of the relation, while the 'shining forth' of the Spirit from the Son describes the eternal side of the relation, on which the temporal is based.[744]

What is the real meaning of these concepts for the dynamic of the Trinity? To begin with, Staniloae believes, they imply that the Spirit does not originate also from the Son. If that were so, it would mean that the Spirit went forth from the Son, rather that coming to rest on him. Developing further the distinctions in the relations between the persons of the Trinity, Staniloae observes that the Scripture rarely uses the phrase 'Spirit of the Father', and that this is 'in order to discourage the idea that the Father begets the Spirit'. At the same time, we never use the title 'Son of the Spirit', which would imply that the Son is born from the Spirit.[745]

The Father alone is the 'uncaused cause' within the Trinity. Otherwise, the result would be a sort of emanationism, an unending succession of divine persons, each one more distanced from the first cause.[746] Yet this does not mean that relations of origin are unimportant. Rather, as we have already stated according to Orthodox theology the relationships are properties of the person.

Secondly, 'if the procession of the Spirit from the Father did not have as its goal his "rest" in the Son, but, instead, a separate existence as person alongside that of the Son, there would again be no compelling reason why still other persons might not arise from the Father, having their existence alongside Son and Spirit and so on

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[743] Garrigues proposes as a possible solution to the *filioque* controversy the formulation 'The Spirit proceeds out of the Father and from the Son', which Staniloae commends for going beyond the limitations of *filioque*, by affirming a distinction in the relation of the Spirit with the Father, and the Son, respectively. Staniloae, 'Procession', 177.

[744] Staniloae ('Procession', 178–180) reacts strongly against the opinion expressed by Garrigues, according to which the eastern teaching on the uncreated energies, connected directly to the sending forth of the Spirit into the world 'should be considered less than a *theologoumenon'*. Staniloae affirms that this 'has been the conviction and experience of Christians since the time of the apostles', but his biblical arguments appear to us to be weak and based on circular reasoning.

[745] Staniloae, 'Trinitarian Relations', 22, 35.

[746] Staniloae later expresses the same idea in the following words: 'The Spirit is no "grandson" within the Holy Trinity, and thus a possible means for the production of an infinite series of great-grandsons', 'Sfinta Treime, structura', 101.

indefinitely'[747]. Thus, the continuous multiplication of the persons in the Godhead is avoided through the resting of the Spirit on the Son. Moreover, as the Spirit proceeding from the Father rests on the Son, who is begotten by the Father, this circle of love produces a bound of unity which is totally different and superior to the unity of essence or being, found in the Augustinian model of the Trinity.

What then are the soteriological and ecclesiological consequences of the Orthodox model for the relationship between the persons of the Trinity? Staniloae speaks about two main consequences: (1) The presence of Christ is always characterised by the Spirit who rests on him, and the presence of the Spirit means the presence of One on whom he rests, i.e. Christ. Otherwise, where the Spirit as a means of living knowledge of Christ is neglected, the result is a cold, theoretical Christology, an effect of the absence of a living interaction with the person of Christ through the Spirit. (2) When believers receive the Spirit of Christ, they cannot receive him apart from Christ, but rather in Christ. This is why, Staniloae believes, we cannot separate Christological/institutional priesthood from Pneumatological/general priesthood. Such a separation, accepted even by Lossky, is made impossible by the fact that 'according to Orthodox teaching, the faithful can posses the Spirit only "in Christ" and vice-versa'.[748]

Thus, for Staniloae, the Church's living in the Spirit is weakened not because Christ is present there without the Spirit (which, as we have seen above, is impossible) but because Christ is not conceived as being close to us through the Spirit, but is seen either – in Catholicism – as a 'remote figure who has left behind a vicar to guide the Church' or is understood – in Protestantism – as leaving each believer 'to guide himself according to the reasonings of his own conscience'.[749]

Staniloae is not original in attributing these ecclesiological consequences to the belief in *filioque*. Lossky had attempted, a few years before him, to construct a solid case of this kind.[750] Thus, as de Halleux summarises Lossky's argument, 'the people of

[747] Staniloae, 'Trinitarian Relations', 23.

[748] Staniloae, 'Trinitarian Relations', 24, 26.

[749] Staniloae, 'Trinitarian Relations', 28–29.

[750] Whereas Staniloae wrote his article on trinitarian relations in 1964, a short time after he came out of prison, Lossky presented his case regarding the ecclesiological consequences at various points in his book *The Mystical Theology of the Eastern Church*, which was published in English in 1957. Staniloae's writings give us sufficient reasons to believe that he was aware of Lossky's work.

God is subjected to the body of Christ, the charism is made subordinate to the institution, inner freedom to imposed authority, prophetism to juridicism, mysticism to scholasticism, the laity to the clergy, the universal priesthood to the ministerial hierarchy, and finally the college of bishops to the primacy of the Pope'.[751]

One may rightly ask to what extent are these charges justified and how one might respond to them? Firstly, the Orthodox appear to be right when they point to a certain neglect of pneumatology in western theology.[752] However, the extent to which this can fairly be attributed to *filioque* is somewhat debatable. Thus Protestants in general accepted *filioque* and this does not appear to have lead them to subject personal charisms to the institution, inner freedom to external authority or universal priesthood to ministerial priesthood. As Stylianopoulos argues, 'one is hard pressed to demonstrate these historically and theologically because such tendencies, as well as their opposites, have existed in most churches with or without the *filioque*'.[753]

Moreover, many charges similar to those levelled against western Christianity, on the grounds of its distortion by the consequences of *filioque*, can just as well be pressed against the eastern Orthodox. They are indictments commonly brought by various authors against certain traits of ancient or contemporary Orthodoxy. Among such critics, we may mention Evangelical authors in Eastern Europe, such as Negrut[754] and Rogobete,[755] secular authors such as Gillet[756] and even Orthodox authors such as

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[751] A de Halleux, 'Orthodoxie et Catholicisme: du personnalisme en pneumatologie', *RTL*, 6 1975, 13–14. See also Congar, *Holy Spirit*, 3:208.

[752] Staniloae, 'Trinitarian Relations', 28–29. Moltmann concurs with this when he states that 'the defence of the *filioque* by the theologians of the western church… led to a one-sided trinitarian doctrine in the west, and hindered the development of a trinitarian pneumatology'– *Trinity and the Kingdom*, 178.

[753] Stylianopoulos, '*Filioque*', 58.

[754] P. Negrut, 'Searching for the True Apostolic Church: What Evangelicals Should Know about Eastern Orthodoxy', *Christian Research Journal*, 20, 1998, 26–36. See also a response to this article at http://arts-sciences.cua.edu/ecs/jdk/ – J. Kalvesmaki, 'What Evangelicals Should Know about Negrut's Assessment of Eastern Orthodoxy'.

[755] S. E. Rogobete, 'Morality and Tradition in Post-communist Orthodox Lands: On the Universality of Human Rights. With Special Reference to Romania', paper delivered at the 2003 Meeting of the American Political Science Association, August 28–31 2003, web site http://archive.allacademic.com/publication/docs/apsa_proceeding/2003-08-24/2277/apsa_proceeding_2277.pdf. See also my article 'Dumitru Staniloae's Theology of Ministry' in L. Turcescu (ed.), *Dumitru Staniloae: Tradition and Modernity in Theology* (Iasi: The Center for Romanian Studies, 2002).

[756] O. Gillet, *Religion et nationalisme. L'idéologie de l'Eglise Orthodoxe Roumaine sous le régime communiste* (Bruxelles: Editions de l'Université de Bruxelles, 1997).

Webster[757] and Guroian.[758] If their critical analyses are justified, it may be that the rejection of *filioque* in eastern Christianity has not been able to protect it from such consequences. We may conclude that these results should be attributed to other factors than those suggested by the Orthodox in general and Lossky in particular. In light of the discussion above, we incline to agree to some extent with Congar that 'the quarrel about the ecclesiological consequences of Filioque is of doubtful value'.[759]

De Margerie argues that the ecclesiological implications of *filioque* are perceived differently in the two traditions, and responds in the following manner to the Orthodox charge presented above:

> The Christ who governs his Church visibly through his Vicar, governs it invisibly through the Paraclete, the Spirit of Truth which he sends to her. The strict parallel between ecclesiology and pneumatology so manifest in the *Filioque*, brings out the pneumatic and spiritual character of the divine institution of the papacy without exaggerating an external authority (as the Orthodox say) because it becomes interiorized by the Spirit of the Son, who promotes only the glory of the Father through submission to the Vicar of the Son.[760]

In direct opposition to the Catholic position presented above, Staniloae offers a perspective on the intra-trinitarian relations that is rooted in the mystical tradition initiated by Gregory Palamas.[761] According to him, the Spirit adds a special dimension to the relation between the Father and the Son, 'for the Spirit is the love of the Father for the Son, which comes down upon the Son and returns as the Son's love for the Father'.[762] Staniloae calls this 'the irradiation of the Spirit from the Son… the response of the Son's love to the loving initiative of the Father who causes the Spirit to proceed'.[763] We may be able to hear in Palamas' words the echo of the typical Augustinian theme of the Spirit as the bond of love between the Father and the Son.

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[757] A. F. C. Webster, *The Price of Prophecy. Orthodox Churches on Peace, Freedom and Security* (Washington D.C.: Ethics and Public Policy Center and Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995[2])

[758] V. Guroian, *Ethics After Christendom. Towards an Ecclesial Christian Ethic* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1994).

[759] Congar, *Holy Spirit*, 3:210–211.

[760] Margerie, *Christian Trinity*, 177.

[761] *Capita Physica, Theologica*, etc. 36, *PG* 150, 1145–A–B.

[762] Staniloae, 'Trinitarian Relations', 29.

[763] Staniloae, 'Trinitarian Relations', 31.

However, the meaning of these words is quite different, as Augustine sets his discussion in the context of the Spirit proceeding from the Father and the Son as one principle. On the other hand, the whole Palamite discussion is set in the context of his theology of deification and the role that the uncreated enhypostatic divine energies play in this process, through which human beings can participate in the divine, according to grace.[764]

The third author whom Staniloae quotes in his effort to clarify the necessary distinctions between the divine persons, without the use of *filioque*, is the Byzantine theologian Joseph Bryennios.[765] In a lecture delivered in 1422, he insisted that there is a fundamental difference between the names given to the Son and the Spirit and those given to the first person in the Godhead, because 'his names belong to him as cause', while the relations between the other two divine persons are not causal. Yet this does not mean that they have a 'purely essential relation', *i.e.* an impersonal one, but derives from the different ways in which the Father causes the Son and the Spirit. The common source explains their common character, while the 'begetting' and the 'procession' explain the differences in their distinct personal character.[766]

In concluding our discussion of Staniloae and *filioque*, we may agree with him that we cannot separate any one divine person from the other two, nor should we confuse their manifestations. Consequently, 'the true Church is Christological and pneumatological, institutional and spontaneous at the same time, or rather, it is Christological because it is pneumatological and vice-versa'.[767] This is why Staniloae rejects both the 'pneumatological individualism' of the Protestants and the non-pneumatological institutionalism of the Catholics.

What we have expounded above may be considered the majority Orthodox position on *filioque*. Besides Staniloae, it represents the position of such Orthodox

[764] The Palamite theology on deification and the uncreated energies is complex and deserves much more attention. In order to do adequate justice to it, we would need to dedicate more space than we can afford in this restricted context. In fact, as it is rightly suggested by Congar (*Holy Spi*rit, 3: 67, n. 1), 'the subject is so full and technical that only specialists can deal adequately with it'.

[765] Staniloae used an old Romanian translation, as J. Bryennios, *Twenty-Two Lectures on the Procession of the Holy Spirit*, tr. Metr. Gregory of Ungrovalahia (Buzau, 1832).

[766] Bryennios, 344–245.

[767] Staniloae, 'Trinitarian Relations', 40.

theologians as Lossky[768] and Nissiotis[769] (the 'hawks', as Ware calls them, in contrast with the more irenic contenders, that the same author calls the 'doves'[770]) and is considered by them to be the traditional patristic position. This position is usually connected closely with the Palamite understanding of the uncreated energies. Yet not everybody in Orthodoxy agrees with this position. As Kallistos Ware, a neo-Palamite himself suggests, 'there is today a school of Orthodox theologians who believe that the divergence between east and west over the *filioque* while by no means unimportant, is not as fundamental as Lossky and his disciples [or Staniloae, for that matter] maintain'.[771]

One of the facts rarely mentioned in Orthodox treatments of *filioque* is that there were also a number of eastern Fathers, such as Epiphanius[772] and Cyril of Alexandria,[773] who, according to de Margerie, 'affirmed explicitly the procession of the Holy Spirit *ek tou huiou*',[774] and, to a certain extent, Gregory of Nyssa, Maximus the Confessor[775] and

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[768] V Lossky, *In the Image and Likeness of God* (Crestwood, N.Y.: SVSP, 1985), especially ch. 4, 'The Procession of the Holy Spirit in Orthodox Trinitarian Theology', 71–96. The author argues (p. 71) that *filioque* 'has been the sole dogmatic grounds for the separation of east and west'. Margerie rightly protests against this suggestion, stating that it is 'historically very inaccurate'. We would rather agree with an Orthodox ecumenist who has argued that 'from the fourth century onwards, the *Filioque* came to form part of the western tradition, but it was never regarded as an obstacle to union until that union was ended for other reasons' – Damaskinos of Tranoupolis, 'Réflexions et perspectives au sujet du rétablissement de la communion sacramentale', *Oriente Cristiano*, 15, 1975, 7–25, quoted by Congar, *Holy Spirit*, 3:202–203.

[769] The author charges the Catholic position on *filioque* with being Christomonistic and with 'isolating the Christological aspect and considering it superior to the pneumatological aspect' – quoted in Margerie, *Christian Trinity*, 174–175.

[770] Ware, *Orthodox Church*, 216.

[771] Ware, *Orthodox Church*, 218.

[772] '…the Spirit who (is) from the two, as Christ himself bears witness to this by saying: "who proceeds from the Father" (Jn. 15:26) and "he will take(receive) from me" (Jn. 16:14, 15)' – Epiphanius, *Anchoratus*, 67, *MG* 43, 137B, as quoted in Congar, *Holy Spirit*, 3:27. Also, 'in his *Anchoratus* of 374 he sometimes simply quotes Jn 15:26 on the Paraclete who proceeds from the Father and receives from the Son and at others he says that he is (which means "has consubstantial being") from the Father and the Son' – Congar, *Holy Spirit*, 3:27.

[773] Cyril of Alexandria, *Thesaurus de Trinitate*, 34, *MG* 75, 585.

[774] Margerie, *Christian Trinity*, 162.

[775] See M. Jugie, *Theologia dogmatica christianorum orientalium ab Ecclesia catholica dissidentium*, 5 vol. (Paris: Letouzey and Ané, 1926–1935) 1:158–159. Mentioning Jugie's opinion explicitly, Burgess argues that 'certainly, Maximus is not the champion of the western view of the *filioque* that some writers have attempted to make him'. Rather, 'he usually speaks of the Spirit proceeding from the Father through the Son who is begotten' – S. M. Burgess, *The Holy Spirit: Eastern Christian Traditions* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1989) 46, n. 17.

John of Damascus,[776] who, argues Congar, 'spoke of a procession from the Father through the Son'.[777] There are also contemporary Orthodox theologians who take a more relaxed view on the double procession. Thus Bulgakov, for instance, comments on the rigid Photian stance on *filioque* in the following manner: 'It is stupefying that the very learned patriarch, who knew the Greek Fathers much better than many of his predecessors and contemporaries, did not know that the patristic doctrine of the procession of the Holy Spirit… differed radically from his own'.[778]

Our discussion on *filioque* would not be complete without a final brief discussion of the particular emphasis laid by Staniloae on his understanding of the Trinity as a 'communion of joy'.

7.6 The Holy Trinity as a Communion of Joy

The concept of joy may appear to be out of place in a serious theological discussion, at least for the western mind. Not so, however, with Staniloae. He believes that:

> If we simply accept the three divine persons and do not try to explain their origin according to the analogy of the functions of the soul, we come to understand… the fact that Trinity of persons assures the fullness of their communion and makes this communion full of the joy one person finds in another. The joy that exists between two is not full unless it is communicated by each to the third.[779]

In another passage he goes as far as to say that 'the Spirit is caused to proceed in order to give joy to each person'. In the immediate context he is referring to the divine persons, but later on in the same section he refers to the joy of communion that the Holy Spirit produces between the faithful, when he saves them from the loneliness of sin which was leading them to death. This is the reason why he is called the Comforter and

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[776] Congar (*Holy Spirit*, 3:39) admits that 'the *per Filium* of John Damascene is not the *Filioque*. In the material sense, John's texts are a denial of the procession of the Spirit "from the Father and the Son as a single principle"'. However, he adds, they 'give the Son a certain place in the eternal state of the Spirit'.

[777] Congar, *Holy Spirit*, 3:51.

[778] S. Bulgakov, *Le Paraclet* (Paris, 1946), 102, as quoted in Margerie, Christian Trinity, 166, n. 41. For an interesting discussion of *filioque*, with an emphasis on the contribution of Bulgakov, see B. Bobrinskoy, 'The *Filioque* Yesterday and Today', in *La signification et l'actualité du IIe Concile Oecumenique pour le monde chrétien d'aujourd'hui* (Chambesy–Genève: Editions du Centre Orthodoxe du Patriarchat Oecumenique, 1982) 275–287.

[779] Staniloae, *EG, 1:*275.

the Sanctifier. The Holy Spirit is 'the expression of the generosity of God, of God's forgetfulness of himself as he 'goes out' towards creatures. The Spirit is the joy God finds in them and they in God'.[780]

7.7 Conclusions

The way that Staniloae approaches the dividing issue of *filioque* is somewhat ambivalent from an ecumenical viewpoint. For example, in his article 'Recent Catholic Studies about *Filioque'*, written in 1973,[781] he complains about the fact that most of the Catholic authors to whom he refers start from the premise that *filioque* perfectly expresses the Christian dogma about the persons of the Trinity, whereas the respective position of the Cappadocians is defective. 'In such conditions', says Staniloae, 'there cannot be any discussion about a reconciliation of the two positions.' Then he adds ironically: 'if *filioque* represents perfection, it does not need to be complemented in any way by the Orthodox teaching, which suffers from the gravest insufficiencies'.[782]

A few years later (1979), however, in his address to the ecumenical gathering at Klingenthal, he remarked that the positions expressed by the western theologians seemed to him 'a positive step towards the eastern doctrine, even if in some ways an insufficient one',[783] which implies that the Orthodox position is the correct one and that it represents the only ground on which reconciliation might take place.

In terms of the conflict between the Orthodox and the Catholics over *filioque* Staniloae is definitely one of the Orthodox hard-liners[784] (the 'hawks') together with Lossky and Nissiotis. Unfortunately, this self-sufficient position on *filioque* seems to be characteristic of many Orthodox (and many Catholic) theologians and represents a

[780] Staniloae, *EG, 1:*277–278.

[781] The article was published in *ST*, XXV, 7–8, 1973, 471–505. In it Staniloae analyses a number of Catholic positions on this topic. There had been presented at an ecumenical colloquium that took place in 1969 at St. Sergius Orthodox Theological Institute in Paris and published in the issue 3–4/1972 of the Dominican ecumenical journal *Istina*.

[782] Staniloae, 'Studii catolice' 476.

[783] Staniloae, 'Procession', 174. The article was initially published in Romanian, in *Ortodoxia*, XXXI, 3–4, 1979, 583–592, and in English, in Lukas Vischner (ed.), *Spirit of God, Spirit of Christ* (London: SPCK and Geneva: WCC, 1981).

[784] O'Brian suggests that in his defence of Orthodoxy against *filioque*, Staniloae 'follows closely the reasoning and objections of Photius, as have many Orthodox writers on this subject' – E. O'Brien, *The Orthodox Pneumatic Ecclesiology of Father Dumitru Staniloae: An Ecumenical Approach* (unpublished M.Phil. dissertation, Dublin: Trinity College, 1984) 20.

serious hindrance to an ecumenical agreement on this issue. Yet, in spite of this rigid position, Staniloae remains open to ecumenism and hopeful in terms of the possibility of regaining the lost unity of the Church. Moreover, we also find in the Orthodox camp more irenic people (the 'doves'), such as Stylianopoulos, Bulgakov and Ware.

After analysing the complex Orthodox understanding of pneumatology and the difficult obstacle *filioque* represents to any healing of the Great Schism, we are ready to take the concluding step in our investigation of Staniloae's triadology by presenting the role played by the concept of *perichoresis* in this trinitarian elaboration.

8 Perichoresis in Staniloae's Triadology

This second major section of our work has been given to Staniloae's understanding of the Christian teaching on the divine tri-unity. Special attention has been paid in that context to the essential role played by the third person in the dynamic of the Trinity. As we have observed, the Christian east has a particular way of conceiving of the work of the Spirit, in which his procession 'from the Father' is the determining factor.

One other characteristic of eastern trinitarian doctrine is its insistence on the crucial role of *perichoresis*. As Sanders writes, 'it is this perichoretic inter-penetration of the persons of the Trinity which has long been considered the central concern of trinitarian theology'.[785] This statement is true of eastern Orthodox theology in general and of Staniloae's theology in particular.

One distinct consequence of this inner dynamic of the Trinity, argues Staniloae, is the fact that 'no divine person is ever, either in the Church as a whole or in the individual believer without the other divine persons or without the particular characteristics of the others'. This is why, as an application of this truth, it is not legitimate to oppose the institutional and the spiritual dimensions in ecclesiology. In order to be the true Church of God, the Christian community has to be at one and the same time 'Christological and pneumatological, institutional and spontaneous'.[786]

8.1 Intersubjectivity versus Passivity

'God is pure subject'. No divine person treats either of the other two as an object. This means, among other things, that there is no passivity within the Trinity. Staniloae observes that even if, in order to express the origination of the second divine person, we usually say that 'the Father begets the Son eternally', we might just as well say that the Son takes his birth from the Father. In the same manner, the Spirit's procession from the Father involves actively both divine persons. Staniloae calls this 'pure common subjectivity' or 'internal intersubjectivity'. From it, he deduces once more the necessity

[785] Sanders, 'Entangled', 175.

[786] Staniloae, 'Trinitarian Relations', 39–40.

of a plurality of subjects within the Godhead. 'An "I" without another "I" and without an object, that is, a subject sunk within himself, is robbed of all reality.'[787]

Based on this concept of intersubjectivity, Staniloae rejects the Catholic phrases *generatio activa*, attributed to the Father, and *generatio passiva*, attributed to the Son. He presents the Father as the divine person active in begetting the Son, while the Son is also active in taking his birth from the Father. The same is true about the procession of the Holy Spirit. Any passivity of one of the divine hypostases would transform that person into an object, which is inconceivable from an Orthodox perspective.[788]

Furthermore, Staniloae holds that the term 'intersubjectivity' implies a 'positive communion' between the divine persons, unlike the Thomistic phrase *oppositio relationis*, which, although taken over from Basil, is reinterpreted, believes Staniloae, in a way that places less emphasis on the reciprocal communication and communion between the members of the Trinity. By 'opposition', Staniloae means 'the specific characteristic that each [hypostasis] brings to communion', which, according to him, does not depend on a constitutive act (like generation or procession) in order for it to exist. He insists on this in order to avoid the communion between the Son and the Spirit being conceived as conditioned also by the procession of the Holy Spirit from the Son. Their intersubjectivity is based not on the *filioque*, but on the fact that

> both are from the Father and in the Father, and each, along with the other, rejoices in the Father not only for that act through which he himself has his origin, but also for the act whereby the other one takes his origin, while each rejoices simultaneously with the other in the fact that both have their origin in one and the same source.[789]

In opposition to this, believes Staniloae, the teaching generically known as *filioque* according to which the third person of the Trinity comes from the other two 'as from a single principle', does not leave any place for this 'reciprocal affirmation of the three subjects as distinct persons'.[790]

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[787] Staniloae, 'Sfinta Treime, structura', 76–77.

[788] Staniloae, *EG, 1:*261–262. Pannenberg argues for a similar position – *Systematic Theology*, 1: 302.

[789] Staniloae, *EG, 1:*261–262.

[790] Staniloae, *EG, 1:*263.

8.2 Perichoresis *as Expression of Unity in God*

The intersubjectivity of the members of the Godhead ensures a perfect unity between them, in such a manner as not to do away with the specificity of each individual hypostasis. 'In the Holy Trinity', says Staniloae, 'all is common and perichoretic and yet in this common movement of the subjectivity of the one in the other there is no confusion of the distinct modes in which this subjectivity is experienced together'.[791] This is consonant with the conclusion formulated by Prestige, according to whom *perichoresis* was a way of expressing divine unity that effectively prevented the recurrence of tritheism, while, at the same time, expressing the real identity of the divine persons.[792]

Each divine 'I' is perceived by Staniloae as being and containing all of the divine nature, but this is true because each hypostasis contains the other 'I's', who are themselves also the all. The result is an eternally existing perfect reciprocal interiority.[793]

Staniloae denies that *perichoresis* may be interpreted as a movement of each divine person 'around' the others, as the suffix *peri* appears to suggest. Thus, he says,

> …with respect to the Holy Trinity, *perichoresis* must mean *a fortiori* a passage of the Spirit through the Son and of the Son through the Spirit. The Father is also included in the *perichoresis* inasmuch as the Spirit passes through the Son as one who is proceeding from the Father and returning to him. Similarly, the Son passes through the Spirit as one begotten by the Father and returning to him.[794]

Here again, the difference between the divine interiority and the human 'exteriority', so to say, presents a major difficulty for our understanding. Within the Trinity the divine persons do not disclose their own 'I', but each two persons disclose the third one, placing that person in the forefront by 'making themselves transparent for that one or hiding themselves (as it were) beneath him'. Because of this perichoretic

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[791] Staniloae, *EG, 1:*263.

[792] Prestige, *God*, 297.

[793] Staniloae, *EG*, 1:264–265.

[794] Staniloae, 'Trinitarian Relations', 38–39.

dynamic, the perfect unity of the whole Trinity is revealed through each divine hypostasis.

Perichoresis, or the reality of the reciprocal interiority of the divine persons, marks the fundamental difference between the unity of humanity and that of the triune divinity:

> The divine hypostases are totally transparent one to another even within the interiority of perfect love. Their consubstantiality is neither preserved nor developed by those fine threads, which, on the human analogy, might unite them as bearers of the same thing. Rather, each one bears the entire nature in common with the others. They are thereby wholly interior to one another…[795]

The anthropological implications of this reality are immense, in terms of our alienated 'I's' being brought back into perfect harmony with the Creator through the work of Christ:

> Only this desire of Christ dwelling within us to substitute the 'I' of the Spirit for his own 'I', and vice versa, carries us along too into the impulse of substituting the 'I' of the Spirit and of Christ and of our neighbour for our own 'I', thus re-establishing that unity of our nature which has been dissolved away by sin.

Consequently, from an Orthodox point of view, our salvation is made possible not just by the sacrifice of Christ but is the work of the entire Trinity.

Before going any further, let us summarise the main conclusions of this second section of our research.

8.3 Conclusions

We have proposed in this thesis to analyse Staniloae's trinitarian ecclesiology with the help of our perichoretic model. In order to to proceed in a rigurous manner, we have done in the present section of our work a presentation of the author's understanding of the Trinity. At the end of it, we believe we are warranted to conclude that Staniloae is clearly a trinitarian theologian. His particular understanding of the doctrine of the Trinity gives unity to everything that he writes in the area of theology.

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[795] Staniloae, *EG, 1:*255.

Although he uses in his discourse insights from contemporary perspectives such as Christian personalism the main source of his trinitarianism is patristic. Staniloae draws mainly from the Cappadocians, but also from Maximus, John of Damascus and especially Gregory Palamas. The questions that he tries to answer on the basis of the trinitarian teaching of the Fathers are nevertheless those that confront the churches of today and he makes this attempt in a manner that fits the communication patterns of his time and of the specific context in which he serves. This is why he is rightly described as a neo-patristic theologian, alongside the great names of the Russian diaspora Lossky, Florovsky and Evdokimov, and the Greek theologians Zizioulas and Yannaras.[796]

Staniloae expends much energy in establishing his theological position on the *filioque*. Unlike some Orthodox contemporaries, such as Bulgakov and Stylianopoulos, he builds his case polemically using arguments from the Photian tradition in a manner similar to Lossky. We could hardly describe him as a 'dove' on this matter, if we are to use the metaphor suggested by Bishop Kallistos; in this sense, he is rather a 'hawk'. Yet this does not stop him from searching for ecumenical solutions which might heal the separation existing between the Orthodox and Catholic traditions concerning this issue.

As we have already mentioned, Staniloae never wrote any treatise on the concept of *perichoresis*. In spite of his frequent allusions to it, *perichoresis* was not necessarily at the forefront of his triadology. Nevertheless, this concept penetrates, 'perichoretically', we may say, almost everything in his formulation of the doctrine of the Trinity and implicitly of his trinitarian ecclesiology. If we are correct in our conclusions on this matter, and we believe we are, then this justifies again our use of the perichoretic model as a means to gain new perspectives on Staniloae's trinitaria ecclesiology, but also as a tool for exploring the consistency of his trinitarian construction of the doctrine of the Church.

Having said all this, we are now prepared to move to an analysis of Staniloae's ecclesiology. But, since the Church is a theo-anthropic reality, we have to begin this study with a concise overview of the anthropological basis of Staniloae's understanding of the Church.

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[796] As we have shown already, this does not mean that Staniloae agrees with them on every point. Rather, what unites them is an attempt to renew contemporary Orthodox theology by re-rooting it the mystical theological tradition of Gregory Palamas.

PART III

A PERICHORETIC PERSPECTIVE ON THE TRINITARIAN ECCLESIOLOGY OF STANILOAE

Motto: Extra ecclesiam nulla salus.[797]

[797] Cyprian, *Ep*. *73.21*.

9 The Anthropological Basis of Staniloae's Ecclesiology

We started our discussion by laying a methodological foundation for our work, arguing for the legitimacy of the use of models in theology and formulating a perichoretic model of the Church to guide our analysis of the trinitarian ecclesiology of Staniloae. According to it, as an icon of the Holy Trinity, the Church is called to reflect in her spatio-temporal reality, in Christ and through the power of the Holy Spirit, the dynamic relationships existing eternally between the divine persons, as described by the concept of trinitarian *perichoresis*.

The second major section of this thesis was dedicated to the study of Staniloae's theology of the Trinity as the larger context and basic premise for this author's theology in general and his theology of the Church in particular.

Before investigating Staniloae's understanding of the doctrine of the Church, we need to add one more preparatory step. Its aim is to clarify in general terms the anthropological basis of Staniloae's ecclesiology.

9.1 The Critical Importance of Anthropology

What does it mean to be human? The answer we give to this question will fundamentally determine the way we conceive of human society in general and of God's new society, the Church. In a broken society such as the one we have in today's Romania after almost fifty years of communism, theological anthropology could become an essential foundation for social renewal and healing. And since the church was affected as much as Romanian society in general by the deforming impact of the utopian Marxist ideology, a renewal of church life will itself be impossible unless we revisit the theological grounding of our doctrine of humanity. According to Gunton this could be the most pressing task for a theologian working in the post communist context.[798]

[798] This statement was made by Gunton in the discussions following papers read at the Theology of Culture Conference of the Research Institute in Systematic Theology, King's College, London, on September 10–12, 2001. He made this comment in response to my question about what should be, in his

Modern theology gave a prominent place to the doctrine of humanity. Newbigin goes so far as to argue that 'Protestant theology since Schleiermacher has had the tendency to become a kind of anthropology',[799] having as its centre and reference point the modern autonomous self. Furthermore, although postmodernity celebrates the death of the self, yet, as Grenz rightly remarks, this 'does not mark the inauguration of pure selflessness'. The postmodern condition preserves 'a semblance of the self' or rather 'a trace of the now absent self'. Nevertheless, there is an essential difference between these two versions of the self. Thus, according to the same author, rather than being the agent of subjectivity, the postmodern self is a self-referential system.[800]

'The Bible, on the other hand', avers Newbigin, 'is dominated by the figure of the living God who acts, speaks, calls and expects an answer',[801] and humanity is summoned to respond by faith to this call. Human beings derive their worth from their Creator, whose image they bear. Moreover, since God, in whose image we are created, is beyond understanding, there is a certain mystery and incomprehensibility about the human person. This is why 'in our talk about humans as well as in our talk about God, there needs to be an apophatic dimension. Our negative theology demands as counterpart a "negative anthropology"'.[802]

In what follows we will show that this in fact represents the theological and doxological perspective chosen by Orthodox theologians in their understanding and presentation of anthropology.

9.2 Christological Anthropology

At the beginning of our research, we were overwhelmed by the daunting task of clarifying such massive areas of Staniloae's theology as Christology and anthropology. However, in the course of our study, we have realised that in fact Staniloae does not

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opinion, the priority of a theologian aiming to contribute to rebuilding the broken fabric of the post communist society.

[799] L. Newbigin, *Foolishness to the Greeks. The Gospel and Western Culture* (London: SPCK, 1986) 40–41.

[800] Grenz, *Social God*, 143.

[801] Newbigin, *Foolishness*, 40–41.

[802] Kallistos of Diokleia, 'Foreword', P. Nellas, *Deification in Christ. The Nature of the Human Person* (Crestwood: NY: SVSP, 1987) 9.

develop a classic anthropology, in line with the modern western theological tradition, but formulates a thoroughly Christological anthropology, which is obviously more consistent with the eastern approach.[803] Thus in order to prepare the ground for the study of Staniloae's ecclesiology proper, it will be sufficient to analyse his Christological understanding of the doctrine of humanity – which we will attempt to do in the present chapter.[804]

This is not a new area of investigation in Staniloae studies. Rogobete devoted a large proportion of his thesis to Staniloae's anthropology, in the context of that author's understanding of God as 'supreme personal reality'. Bartos had done the same, in the context of his study of Staniloae's understanding of *theosis*.[805] Since we are in basic agreement with their analysis and conclusions, we will attempt to complete their perspectives with a study of relevant passages to which they gave less attention.

Frunza also has devoted a small monograph to Staniloae's anthropology.[806] Although interesting in itself as an overview, we have found this analysis less helpful for the purposes of our research. Thus, as anthropology is not the focus of our study, we will mainly build critically on the conclusions of the first two authors, while including relevant comments from others who have written on this topic.

The task of theological anthropology is to unfold the meaning and the implications of the Christian understanding of humanity. Certainly, theology has conceived of many possible starting points for constructing its understanding of humanhood. However, for Staniloae, as for many other contemporary trinitarian theologians, the proper context for this endeavour is the Christian confession of the triune God.

We may argue that there is a certain ecumenical agreement on this point in contemporary theology. Thus, in the Protestant camp, Grenz strongly affirms that

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[803] For a similar perspective, see Rogobete, *Subject*, 125, n. 20.

[804] Staniloae unfolds his Christological understanding of anthropology mainly in three studies: (1) *Iisus Hristos sau Restaurarea omului* (Craiova: Omniscop, 1993), first published in 1943; (2) *Chipul nemuritor al lui Dumnezeu* (Craiova: Editura Mitropoliei Olteniei, 1987) and (3) 'Omul si Dumnezeu' in *Studii de teologie dogmatica ortodoxa* (Craiova: Editura Mitropoliei Olteniei, 1991) 155–303.

[805] Bartos, *DEOT*. See particularly ch. 4, 'The Anthropological Aspect of Deification', 95–161.

[806] S. Frunza, *O antropologie mistica. Introducere in gindirea Parintelui Staniloae* (Craiova: Omniscop, 1996).

'Christian theological anthropology is *trinitarian* theological anthropology'.[807] And since the triune God has been revealed to us through Christ in the mystery of salvation history, we may as well argue that a properly Christian understanding of what it means to be human should be Christological anthropology developed in trinitarian and ecclesiological context. According to the Catholic theologian de Margerie, 'in the created world the total, though not adequate nor still less exhaustive, image of the trinitarian mystery is man, personal and familial, in the bosom of the mystery of the Church, of the pilgrim Church that comes from God Father, Son and Spirit…'[808] Bria also rightly points out that from an Orthodox perspective theology should speak about 'the development of the human through its being united with Christ, hence, the impossibility of separating Christology from anthropology.'[809] Furthermore, writes Bishop Kallistos, commenting on the standard Orthodox presentation of anthropology by Nellas, 'Jesus Christ is the man, the model of what it means for us to be human; …all theology of the human person needs to be Christ-centred, and so in the end anthropology turns out to be an aspect of Christology'.[810]

We are prepared to argue in the rest of this chapter that this is precisely the trajectory followed by Staniloae.

Although generally critical of the anthropocentric character of western theology,[811] Staniloae appreciates the attention given to anthropology in western philosophy and theology. Thus he argues in an early article that 'Orthodox theology itself should give more attention to anthropology' expressing his conviction that 'the theologians of the other confessions are waiting with great interest for the clarification of the Orthodox doctrine of humanity'.[812] This is why he wrote an enthusiastic review[813]

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[807] Grenz, *Social God*, 23. In this book, in a typically postmodern manner, Grenz uses anthropology as the starting point for his (unfortunately) never unfinished systematic theology.

[808] Margerie, *Christian Trinity*, xviii.

[809] I. Bria, 'Teologia Parintelui Dumitru Staniloae si hermeneutica ecumenica', *Biserica Ortodoxa Romana*, 118, 4–6, Apr–June 2000, 172.

[810] Kallistos, 'Foreword', Nellas, *Deification*, 13.

[811] Thus, Staniloae wrote in his address for the symposium organised for his ninetieth birthday (which he did not deliver, because of his death): 'in these books I have emphasised both the importance given by God to man through his love and the inseparability of Christology from anthropology. This value of the human is not recognised anymore in the [western] confessions that do not see a strong connection between the Son of God and the human' – D. Staniloae 'Iubitii mei frati sibieni', in Ica, *PC*, 638,

[812] D. Staniloae, 'Elemente de antropologie ortodoxa', in *Prinos inchinat IPS Nicodim cu prilejul implinirii a optzeci de ani de virsta* (Bucuresti: EIMBOR, 1946), 237.

of the quite distinctive anthropological opus of Nellas called *Zoon Theoumenon*, when it was published in 1979.[814] He contends that Nellas's book is characterised by 'total fidelity to the patristic texts about man'.[815]

According to Nellas, man is the 'image of the image' that is Christ, as presented by the apostle Paul and the Church Fathers. This implies that humans depend for their existence on their archetype.[816] As a result, the chief aim of humanity, according to Nellas, is deification, or, more precisely, 'Christification'.[817] However, explains Staniloae, humans do not bear the image of God according to being', as Christ does in relation to the Father.[818]

Nellas argues that human beings are characterised by rationality, creativity, authority over creation, freedom and responsibility. These he interprets in the context of the biblical and patristic theme of the 'garments of skin' that God gave to Adam in his postlapsarian state as consequence and punishment for sin. The author interprets them as expressing 'the mortality which man put on as his second nature after the fall'.[819] This reality has a two-fold character. It includes the bodily or physiological consequences of sin, but it also has a moral dimension.

In opposition to western theological anthropology, construed in this manner, Orthodoxy, according to Horhoianu, who follows in this Staniloae's position, views humanity as 'the connecting ring, the ontological centre of the world, having, through creation, the task of leading the world, through perfection, to its ground and source: God. As the last of the creatures, man has the divine mission to unify creation and to

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[813] D. Staniloae, 'Recenzie la P. Nellas, *Zoon Theoumenon*', *Ortodoxia*, 32, 1980, 561–564. He also wrote a review of the second edition of the book, with the title 'Note pe marginea unei carti de antropologie ortodoxa', *Ortodoxia*, 39, 1, 1988, 148–156.

[814] Nellas, *Deification*. The original title, inspired from St. Gregory of Nazianzus, *Oration* 38, 11, means literally 'deified living creature'. Kallistos describes it as 'a work of synthesis, yet without being rigidly systematic', which, the author explained to him shortly before his premature death, was deliberate – Kallistos, 'Foreword', 12–13.

[815] Staniloae, 'Note', 148.

[816] Nellas, *Deification*, 23.

[817] Nellas, *Deification*, 39.

[818] Staniloae, 'Note', 149.

[819] Nellas, *Deification*, 46.

raise it back to the unspeakable glory of God'.[820] This statement has serious ecclesiological implications, which we will unfold in the conclusions to this chapter.

Among these consequences, in line with some patristic authors, such as Maximus, Gregory of Nyssa and Kabasila, Nellas includes sexual union, conception, birth, eating, excretion, etc.[821] Observing, however, the apparent contradiction between this and the fact that Adam and Eve are supposed to have had some sort of sexual intercourse in Eden, at least in order to be able to multiply, Nellas becomes suddenly apophatic. He explains that 'precisely what the phrase "he shall cleave to his wife and the two shall become one flesh" (Gen 2:24) implied before the fall, to what form and quality of marriage it led, we do not know,, since we do not know precisely what the human body was like before the fall'.[822]

Nellas comments that God 'offers this relatively positive condition of the "garments of skin" as a second blessing to a self-exiled humanity. He adds it like a second nature to the existing human nature, so that by using it correctly humanity can survive and realise its original goal in Christ'.[823] It is in being clothed with this condition than human beings are called to grow through grace into the likeness of Christ, who is the image of the Father, in the process of deification.

Staniloae himself devoted a large portion of his last anthropological study to unfolding the paradoxical nature of humanity, which he expressed synthetically in the following manner: 'Man has inestimable nobility, but, on the other hand, he is created out of nothing'.[824] The sign of this nobility consists in the fact that although human persons 'were created without being asked about it, they were created as free human beings'.[825] By doing this, God limited himself to a certain extent; he accepted a 'humility of sorts'. Having created the world out of love and for love, by that very

[820] Horhoianu, 'Invatatura despre Dumnezeu', 92.

[821] Nellas, *Deification*, 48–49.

[822] Nellas, *Deification*, 72–73.

[823] Nellas, *Deification*, 61.

[824] Staniloae, 'Omul si Dumnezeu', 161.

[825] Staniloae, 'Omul si Dumnezeu', 264.

action God allowed the possibility that humans would choose to turn their back on him.[826]

However, Staniloae rejects the idea that evil is necessary and 'organically connected to existence', as if if evil did not exist, good could not show itself as good.[827] Rather, he defines evil as 'separation from God', 'weakening and distortion of being'.[828] Following the classic approach of Orthodoxy, Staniloae views mortality and death itself as the main consequence of sin and the focal point of incarnation: 'this is why the Son of God himself becomes human: in order to bring man a kind of love that will be able to save him from death'.[829] At the same time, the human nature of Christ was not constituted as a separate hypostasis that appeared in the pre-existent hypostasis of the Son of God. This was possible because, even if distinct and limited, human nature is not contradictory nor 'completely separated' from God.[830]

Developing the idea of the paradoxical nature of the human being, Staniloae explains that: (1) man is inexhaustible, but finite; (2) he aims to grasp everything through knowledge, but fails to do so; (3) he is torn between his drive for perfection and his temptation to give in to pleasure; (4) although he lives in the present, he contains in himself the past and stretches himself towards an endless future; (5) man is one and yet very complex; (6) he is able to raise himself above the laws and the limited character of matter, but he may also choose to close in, deluding himself that he will reach infinity by this means; (7) man is limited and, at the same time indefinite; (8) man is created out of nothing and this should keep him humble, but at the same time he is a conscious creation of God, able to know God, and this makes him invaluable; (9) he values both time and eternity; (10) man can irradiate both light and darkness; (11) man is both temporal and eternal; (12) man's ability to grasp the multiplicity of reality surrounding him would be impossible without the absolute One, in whom this multiplicity exists; (13) man can both be rich spiritually and give liberally to others; (14) man is both

[826] Staniloae, 'Omul si Dumnezeu', 281.
[827] Staniloae, 'Omul si Dumnezeu', 279.
[828] Staniloae, 'Omul si Dumnezeu', 284,
[829] Staniloae, 'Omul si Dumnezeu', 286.
[830] Staniloae, 'Omul si Dumnezeu', 280–290.

universal and unique; and, finally (15) man is able to be united with other human beings, but without confusion.[831]

This lengthy and somewhat convoluted description contains a certain degree of redundancy, but its purpose, in the way Staniloae builds his argument, is to lay the foundation for his main message: man is a dialogical being. He was made for communion, in the image of the eternal communion in the bosom of the Holy Trinity,[832] or, as one commentator puts it, 'to be a person is to be an icon of the trinitarian *koinonia*'.[833] Staniloae views men and women as reflections of the Holy Trinity. From this connection, he draws the conclusion that human persons are dialogical beings, called to communicate, to be in constant interaction with each other. In addition, since the divine hypostases maintain a clear identity in their perichoretic communication with each other, in the same manner human beings have to keep their distinctiveness, without confusion, while expressing their dialogical nature.[834]

As in the case of other doctrines, Staniloae develops his anthropology polemically in relation to what he perceives to be the more juridical approach to this issue in western theology. Thus he argues that because of this perspective western theology, whether Catholic or Protestant, 'is not aware of the transformation produced in the human nature assumed by Christ'. Consequently it does not emphasise that 'man needs to grow in the likeness of Christ through the work of Christ's presence in him', in the context of the Church as the Body of Christ. The result is that, in Staniloae's opinion, the church becomes for Catholics a mere dispenser of her 'treasure' of created grace, 'separately from Christ', while 'in Protestantism and Evangelicalism her value as the context of communion with Christ and between people is not correctly understood'.[835]

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[831] Staniloae, 'Omul si Dumnezeu', 173–201.

[832] 'From the Holy Trinity the human persons receive not only their dialogical, communicative character, which maintains and strengthens their unity, but also their eternal non confusion. So, as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are [one] together without confusion, it is the same with human persons' – Staniloae, 'Omul si Dumnezeu', 205.

[833] Kallistos, Ware, 'Foreword', xx. In an earlier article, the same author argues tha 'we humans, icons of the Trinity, are called to figure forth on earth the movements of God's *perichoresis*, reproducind here below the mutual lovethat passes unceasingly in heaven between Father, Son and Holy Spirit' – Kallistos, 'Human Person', 17.

[834] Staniloae, 'Omul si Dumnezeu', 202–205.

[835] Staniloae, 'Note', 155.

9.3 Imago Dei *and Deification*

One important aspect that defines the particular Orthodox understanding of the doctrine of humanity is the way in which Orthodoxy conceives of the *imago dei* in the context of creation, fall and redemption, particularly from the perspective of deification. Burgess explains correctly that, unlike the western understanding of human depravity, deriving from the Tertullian-Augustinian tradition, Orthodoxy emphasises the goodness of creation in general and of humanity in particular. Certainly, the image of God in humanity was 'tarnished' or weakened because of the Fall, and, as a result, 'nature became subject to Satan', but the Spirit is the one who 'liberates humankind from dependence of nature'.[836]

Commenting on this aspect of Staniloae's anthropology, Bartos argues correctly that the author 'does not want to ignore the alteration of the image but only to stress its potentiality to continue its dialogue with God. The concept of deification, therefore, regards personal relationships as a matrix of communion according to the trinitarian model'.[837] In the context of a similar discussion, Bobrinskoy points out that in Cyril of Alexandria, and, we would add, in most Orthodox theology, we find 'a descending trend', one where trinitarian grace is communicated "from the Father, through the Son, in the Holy Spirit", and an ascending trend, one where the Spirit, in turn, acts and makes us conformed to the Son, true image of the Father'.[838]

The history of theology provides a wide variety of interpretations of the image of God in human beings. Ferguson mentions five such positions: (1) *the anthropomorphic view*, held by the Audiani in the fourth century, that 'man is physically the image of God';[839] (2) *the somewhat dualistic view*, held by Augustine, that God's being as Trinity is the prototype of humanity, and thus 'looks for *vestigia*

[836] S. M. Burgess, *The Holy Spirit: Eastern Christian Traditions* (Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1989) 2.

[837] Bartos, *DEOT*, 331.

[838] B. Bobrinskoy, *The Mystery of the Trinity. Trinitarian Experience and Vision in the Biblical and Patristic Tradition* (Crestwood: SVSP, 1999) 252.

[839] In reaction to exaggerated spiritual views of human nature, which tended to exclude the body from the image of God in humans, another author argues that 'Hebrews thought in terms of a physical resemblance between God and human beings' – C. Ryder Smith, *The Bible Doctrine of Man* (London: Epworth, 1951), 56–58. A similar position is held by the Mormons.

Trinitatis in man', more precisely in the rational 'soul' of man;[840] (3) *the functional view*, according to which image can be defined in terms of man's dominion over the created order; (4) *the ethical view*, favoured by Calvin, among others, which describes man as being in the likeness of God's holiness and righteousness; (5) *the relational societal view*, favoured by Barth, according to whom, explains Ferguson, God's image 'is reflected in man-and-woman created as a sign of hope of the coming Son of God who is himself the image of God'.[841]

Even if a clear consensus does not exist,[842] many contemporary theologians,[843] including Staniloae, are opting for a combination of these positions, with an emphasis on the relational view. Thus, writes Grenz, 'because God is the triune one, the three persons-in-relationship, the *imago dei* must in some sense entail humans-in-relationahips as well'.[844] What makes the difference, however, is the specific soteriological paradigm within which each particular theologian works.

Thus, explains Staniloae, in a manner similar to Barth's,[845] man is a communitarian relational entity. Indeed, 'the fact that Genesis speaks of the image in connection with the creation of the human person as a couple may have significance for the communitarian character of the image and for its development in common'. Furthermore, 'the divine image in the human person is an image of the Trinity and reveals itself in human communion'.[846] Consequently, the proper context for the theological understanding of the human person is the doctrine of the Trinity and the inter-personal dynamics between the divine persons, which brings us again to the

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[840] It may very well be that Augustine himself was aware of the inadequacy of this analysis, 'since memory, understanding and will do not constitute a human person, but a human mind' – Sherlock, *Doctrine of Humanity*, 80.

[841] S. B. Ferguson, 'Image of God' in S. B. Ferguson and D. F. Wright (eds.), *New Dictionary of Theology* (Downers Grove, Ill.: IVP, 1988) 328–329.

[842] One dissenting voice argues that the capacities implied by personhood are not dependent on relationality (only the skills, i.e. the actualisation of those potentialities may be relationships dependent) – H. A. Harris, 'Should We Say that Personhood Is Relational?', *SJT*, 51, 2, 1998, 214–234.

[843] See for instance A. J. Torrance, *Persons in Communion. Trinitarian Description and Human Participation* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), where the author aims to rehabilitate, *contra* Barth, the classic understanding of 'person' as a relational reality, applied at the levels of both divinity and humanity.

[844] Grenz, 'Ecclesiology', 267.

[845] Staniloae does not indicate if he is indebted or not to Barth for this perspective.

[846] Staniloae. *EG*, 2:94–95.

implications of the trinitarian concept of *perichoresis* that we will develop further in the next chapters.

According to Staniloae, sin has not brought about an obliteration of the image. He writes: 'Indeed, to a certain extent even the image itself has been weakened because it has not been activated fully in the work of growing into likeness. An image in its fullness is an image that passes into act in the very movement of growing towards likeness'. This does not imply, argues Staniloae, that the image is changed, but that because of the fall it becomes inactive, passive, meaning that 'it cannot of itself bring its potencies into act along the proper path'.[847]

In the above text, Staniloae introduces us to the Eastern patristic view of the distinction between 'image', and 'likeness'. As the Damascene explained, '"in the image" points therefore to the mind and freedom, and "in the likeness" to the greatest possible similitude in virtue'.[848] It is quite clear that such a distinction can hardly be justified by a rigorous exegesis of Genesis 1. Nevertheless, as in the similar case of *perichoresis* illustrated through the metaphor of dance, this model could afford a series of fruitful openings into theological anthropology.

According to the Orthodox theological paradigm, the weakened image of God in man can be restored, and the likeness can be pursued, through the complex process of deification. Thus, explains Staniloae, likeness 'is not just the final state of deification; it is also the entire path along which the image develops through the agency of the human will stimulated and assisted by the grace of God'.[849] By this he means, together with the Eastern Fathers, that through deification the image develops into what becomes the likeness of created human beings with their divine creator, not according to being, as in the case of Christ, but by grace, through the uncreated enhypostatic energies of God.

We do not intend here to give a thorough analysis of the Orthodox concept of deification.[850] Others have done so and Bartos produced a very thorough study of

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[847] Staniloae, *EG*, 2:90–91.

[848] John of Damascus, *De fide orthodoxa*, 2.12, *PG* 94.92013. See also Staniloae, *EG*, 2:90.

[849] Staniloae, EG, 2:89.

[850] For a general discussion on the concept of deification in Orthodoxy, see Nellas, *Deification*; G. I. Mantzaridis, *The Deification of Man: St Gregory Palamas and the Orthodox Tradition* (Crestwood, NY: SVSP, 1984); Staniloae, 'Image'.

Staniloae's understanding of the concept.[851] We need to mention, however, that for the superficial observer, who is not acquainted with the Orthodox theological paradigm, deification could easily be confused with a form of pantheism. Yet, as Staniloae explains, nothing could be further from the truth, because 'the human being is not destined to lose his individuality or to melt together with the cosmos into some impersonal whole, but on the contrary, the human being is the one who is to make the world a personal reality'.[852] Bartos observes that Staniloae deals with this concept first in the context of his mystical theology and then in the field of dogmatics. This *taxis* is not a random feature in Staniloae's theology, but is intended to convey a message. For him, deification is before anything else a living experience, not an abstract concept on which to speculate. It is based on the dynamic between the human and the divine nature in the person of Christ and it is accomplished in the context of the Church.[853] This brings us to the next step in our unfolding of Staniloae's anthropology, that of the relationship between the concepts of 'nature' and 'person'.

9.4 Body and Soul vs. Nature and Person

In spite of the exaggerated attention given sometimes to the structure of the human, in what Christian anthropology is concerned, the fundamental distinction is not between the material and the spiritual, body and soul (spirit) but between nature and person.

Christian anthropologists are traditionally divided according to their allegiance to a bipartite structure of the human being (the dichotomists) or to a tripartite structure (the trichotomists). Biblical passages such as 1 Thessalonians 5:23 and the discussion in 1 Corinthians about those who are 'spiritual' (Gr. *pneumatikos*, 3:1) or 'soulish' (Gr. *psychikos*, 2:14) or 'carnal' (Gr. *sarkikos*, 3:2) apparently justify the tripartite structure of the human person, as made of body (the material part), soul (the psychological part) and spirit (the superior human faculties that help him/her relate to God).[854]

[851] See Bartos, *Deification*.

[852] Staniloae, EG, 2:112.

[853] Bartos, *Deification*, 334.

[854] For a more in-depth analysis of this issue, see J. B. Heard, *The Tripartite Nature of Man. Spirit, Soul and Body* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1868[2]). We have to remember also that Origen used the supposedly tripartite structure of man as a basis for suggesting a three levels structure of Biblical interpretation. For a more recent critical evaluation of trichotomy, see G. Evans, 'What Is Man? A Reformed Response', *Affirmation & Critique*, 3, Jan 1998, 54–59.

Nevertheless, there are a number of reasons why we need to beware of such speculations. Firstly, the obvious emphasis of the text in 1 Thessalonians interpreted in its context is not on a tripartite structure (nor on a bipartite one, for that matter) but on the fundamental existential unity of the human being. Secondly, the use of the texts in 1 Corinthians in order to justify trichotomism is based on doubtful linguistic speculation, rather than on sound contextual exegesis. We need to observe that in these instances Paul is not using the words *soma* and *somatikos*, but *sarx* and *sarkikos*, which in context refer not to the person dominated by his/her psychological abilities, but to the 'natural' man, the unconverted, who does not have the Holy Spirit within. Thirdly, the Hellenistic, rather than biblical origin of these anthropological speculations is obvious. The Platonic dichotomy of soul and body, and the Aristotelian distinction between the 'animal soul', the more organic functions of the soul, like breathing, and the 'rational soul', the more intellectual human side, form the background for the trichotomist, and, we may add, also for the dichotomist speculations of both early and modern Christian writers.[855]

Orthodox anthropologists, including Staniloae, opt firmly for a dichotomic (and implicitly against a trichotomic) view of the human person, without appearing too concerned about the risks involved in the Platonist roots of this view. Thus we find Staniloae explaining:

> Because neither soul nor body exists separately, even for an instant, Christian teaching prefers to speak not of the spirit of man, but of his soul… Hence for Christian teaching the spirit is not an entity in man distinct from the soul, but rather consists of the higher functions of the soul that are dedicated less to the care of the body than to a kind of thinking that is capable of rising even to the thought of its Creator.[856]

Concerning the importance of the body and its relation with the soul, Staniloae believes that 'the body itself does not come into existence – as body in the strict sense –

[855] One author uses the term 'Gnostic' in order to describe the philosophical roots of trichotomism, but fails to give adequate attention to the overwhelming biblical emphasis on the unity of the human being and to the similar Greek roots of the dichotomism that he entertains – K. Riddlebarger, 'Trichotomy: Beachhead to Gnostic Influences', *Modern Reformation*, July–August 1995, http://www.modernreformation.org/mr95/JulAug/mr9504trichotomy.html

[856] Staniloae, *EG*, 2:71.

before the soul, just as the soul, too, does not begin to exist through creation… before its own individual and appropriate body starts to take form'.[857]

Although he keeps closely in view the importance of the body in its present and resurrected state, we also find Staniloae making statements like: 'the human soul is made in the image of the personal God – both by reason of its consciousness and also in virtue of its quality as a subject among subjects'.[858] This could easily attract accusations of implicit Platonist dualism, as we have seen earlier, in the discussion of the Orthodox understanding of man as the image of God.

Important as the distinction between the body and the soul may be for Staniloae, the relationship between the concept of 'person' and the concept of 'nature' is much more central to his definition of humanity. Thus he writes: 'the purpose of creation is thus fulfilled through this bringing into existence of the conscious created person, for the Creator also is person, and creation has as its purpose to bring about a dialogue between the supreme personal reality and the created persons'.[859]

Staniloae rejects the 'partial opposition' that Lossky allows for in the distinction between nature and person.[860] He elucidates this opposition as being explained by the fact that Lossky 'understands nature in the lesser sense of the word, that is, as the nature that is parcelled out between individuals'. Thus, according to Staniloae, Lossky refers 'not to human nature as such, but to a distorted condition of that nature', because of sin, an understanding that Staniloae finds wanting.[861]

In the centre of this discussion is the necessary distinction between 'person' (a relational concept rooted in trinitarian thinking) and 'individual' (the autonomous self promoted by Enlightenment thinking). Staniloae makes clear that 'the person has

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[857] Staniloae, *EG*, 2:69. In stating this, the author distances himself from the Origenistic theory of the pre-existence of the soul.

[858] Staniloae, *EG*, 2:68. Later, in the same text (p. 87–88), Staniloae makes it clear, following Irenaeus, Nyssa and Palamas, that 'not only the soul, but also the body of man shares in the character of the image, being created in the image of God… No single component of the human being possesses the quality of being image by itself alone, but only in so far as the whole person manifests himself through each part and action'.

[859] Staniloae, *EG*, 2:69. The concept of 'supreme personal reality' stands, according to Rogobete at the very centre of Staniloae's theological construction, as he argues in the conclusions of his research on Staniloae's anthropology (*Subject*, 278).

[860] V. Lossky, *Orthodox Theology. An Introduction* (Crestwood, NY: SVSP, 1989) 125–128.

[861] Staniloae, *EG*, 2:97. For a more in-depth discussion of this aspect, see Rogobete, *Subject*, 272–277; Ica jr, *Mystagogia Trinitatis*, 167–173; and Mosoiu, *Taina prezentei*, 167–169.

become an individual not because he has blended in with the elements of human nature but… because he wishes to keep the nature that he himself represents separated off from human nature as a whole'. He further adds that in fact 'the Fathers in general make no distinction of content between person and nature.[862] When nature is viewed from the perspective of God's purposes for it, the human beings among whom this nature is divided are encouraged to become persons in the true sense of this word, in the *extasis* of their *agape* love, reaching out to each other.

This Orthodox understanding of the concept of person emphasises again the fundamental dialogical nature of humanity. As we shall see in the next chapters, this has vast implications for the definition of human persons as ecclesial beings and for the definition of the Church as the context in which these dialogical beings, made in the image of the dialogical divine persons, are actualising their spiritual potential in the process of deification, the aim of which is their progressive transformation according to the image of the One who is the image of the Father.

9.5 Conclusions

In what follows, we would like to summarise and evaluate Staniloae's anthropology, with an emphasis on its ecclesiological implications.

In the context of the brokenness that characterises post-communist society, a theological construction which gives human dignity the place it deserves can play that central role in the renewal of the church and of society as a whole which is so necessary in our part of the world.

Orthodox theology in general and Staniloae in particular conceives of human personhood as a mystery, a paradoxical reality. The human being is 'the image of the image', a creaturely reflection of Christ, who is the image of the eternal Father and called to grow in resemblance to Christ, through the Spirit (a process which Nellas calls 'Christification' and Orthodoxy generally describes as deification). As such, human beings are endowed with particular nobility and with the call to be a 'connecting ring' between the Creator and his creation. In turn, this makes the Church, the society made of such people, an exceptional kind of community, 'a chosen generation, a royal

[862] Staniloae, *EG*, 2:99.

priesthood, a holy nation' (1 Pet 2:9), through which 'in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both those which are in heaven and those which are on earth' (Eph. 1:10).

Unlike much of modern theology, which is thoroughly anthropocentric, Staniloae's anthropology is rooted in Christology. Christ is the quintessential human being, the one whose perfection we are called to emulate in the power of the Spirit 'to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ' (Eph. 4:13). What this implies for ecclesiology is that the Church cannot be defined in purely immanent sociological terms, as a voluntaristic society. This is often the case in some 'free church' ecclesiologies.[863] The Church needs to be defined in reference to Christ (and the Spirit) if it is to deserve its description as 'the mystical body of Christ'.

This criticism addressed by Staniloae to non-Orthodox traditions is warranted. Yet, in other instances, like in that of their alleged inability to understand the need of humanity to grow in the likeness of Christ through the work of Christ's presence, the author fails to engage the actual positions formulated by the main voices within Catholicism and Protestantism. Rather, as is often the case with Staniloae, he reacts in his presentation against a caricature of western theology that is easily dismissed by an appeal to the consensus of the Fathers, without a serious exegetical engagement with the relevant biblical texts.

At the same time, because humans are created in the image of God, however that resemblance may be interpreted, and because God is a divine community of persons who relate to each other in perichoretic loving harmony, proper Christian anthropology should be thoroughly trinitarian. This means that human beings are fundamentally 'dialogical' communitarian beings. Individualism is an expression of the fall and a profound distortion of this call to live in loving community and *ecstatic* self-giving to others. What this entails for ecclesial living is that the members of the church have to reflect in their relationships the perichoretic dynamic that exists within the Holy Trinity.

The image of God in humanity involves not just the spiritual side, but also the body. In spite of its ambiguous attitude to the body, Orthodoxy in general and Staniloae

[863] See on this point the comment made by Baptist theologian S. Grenz, who evaluates that 'under the impulse of individualism, the contractual [voluntarist] view all too easily devalues the church' – Grenz, 'Ecclesiology', 257.

in particular emphasise that the human body is included in God's redemptive plan and implicitly is called to play an important role in the context of the Church. Consequently, an ecclesiology that is exclusively or predominantly 'spiritual' would not do justice to the biblical emphasis on the human being as a unified whole.

One particular aspect needs special attention in this context. It has to do with sexuality. We observe in this area a quite ambivalent attitude that is characteristic not just of Nellas but of much of Orthodox theology, including that of Staniloae. Its roots lie, we believe, in the negative Neo-Platonic view of the physical realm. The following relevant passage from Staniloae strengthens this impression.

> In the distinction between man and woman, humanity possesses as a positive fact quite an important element of complementarity and thus also the opportunity for a heightened spiritual enrichment. It is this that surpasses *the violence of sexual pleasure* wherein the material sensibility has acquired so overwhelming a force, as it is this that endures beyond it. The love between man and woman surpasses the dimensions of sexual pleasure; we may even say that *such love can grow more profound and is more lasting where no preoccupation with this pleasure exists*.[864]

Obviously, our attitude to the body is affected by the fallenness of the human nature, even in its regenerated state. Orthodoxy insists that the image of God in us has been weakened by sin (but not obliterated) and that we are called to grow into likeness with God (distinct from the image and interpreted as actualising the God-given potential of holiness), through deification. We are all wearing our 'garments of skin', with their consequential limitations, which, nevertheless, can be transformed into an opportunity, a 'second blessing to a self-exiled humanity', as Nellas describes it.[865]

We observe in this a sort of 'ontological optimism' and a 'reluctance to reflect upon the inner brokenness of creation as a result of the Fall',[866] for which Staniloae has been criticised sometimes, even by the Orthodox.

The discussion above involves for our understanding of the Church that, given their creatureliness and their fallenness, human ecclesial beings cannot be expected to reflect perfectly in their relationships the perichoretic dynamic existing between the

[864] Staniloae, *EG*, 2:96 (our emphasis).

[865] Nellas, *Deification*, 61.

[866] Meyendorff, 'Foreword', 9.

divine persons. Such a triumphalistic ecclesiology would not help, but would only create unrealistic expectations and would lead to the projecting of a false image of perfection, as a sort of 'realised eschatology'.

Following these concluding considerations on Staniloae's anthropology and their ecclesiological consequences, we are now prepared to engage in a full analysis of Staniloae's doctrine of the Church, using our perichoretic model as a lens through which to evaluate the consistency of the assumed trinitarianism that forms the basis of his theological construction.

10 The Trinitarian Foundation of the Church

Ecclesiology was never a major concern for the Early Church. In fact, as has been argued, 'it is not self-evident that the concept of the Church should be a separate dogmatic theme'.[867] The Donatist controversy of the fourth century was one of the first opportunities for the church to reflect on her nature and identity. The events following the Great Schism of 1054 led to a more serious preoccupation with ecclesiology[868] which culminated in 1301–1302 when James of Viterbo wrote *De regimine christiano*, considered the first treatise of ecclesiology in the history of Christian doctrine.[869]

The Reformation led to a renewal of the discussions and controversies around the definition of the Church.[870] It was, however, during the twentieth century that ecclesiology became central to the Christian theological agenda. This is why that century has been called 'the century of the church'[871].

Kärkkäinen argues that the rapid growth of interest in ecclesiological matters during the past century was due primarily to the development of the modern ecumenical movement.[872] To this he adds at least two other reasons: (1) 'the rapid growth of Christianity outside the west, so much so that currently the majority of Christians are in the Two-Thirds World' and (2) 'the rise of non-traditional forms of the church both in the west and elsewhere'.[873]

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[867] Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 3:21.

[868] It is interesting and significant for the relative lack of interest in a systematic formulation of the doctrine of the Church in the Middle Ages, that neither Augustine, the Cappadocians nor Aquinas ever wrote a treatise on ecclesiology.

[869] A. Dulles and P. Granfield, *The Theology of the Church. A Bibliography* (New York: Paulist, 1999) 1.

[870] For a short presentation of the ecclesiological debates during the Reformation, see A. McGrath, *Christian Theology. An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994) 410–417.

[871] O. Dibelius, *Das Jahrhundert der Kirche* (Berlin: 1926). See also Dulles and Granfield, *Bibliography*, 2. Given the early date when this phrase was formulated, we may consider it somewhat prophetic.

[872] 'No other movement in the history of the Christian church, perhaps with the exception of Reformation, has shaped the thinking and practice of Christendom as much as the modern movement for Christian unity' – V.-M. Kärkkäinen, *An Introduction to Ecclesiology. Ecumenical, Historical and Global Perspectives* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2002) 7–8.

[873] Kärkkäinen, *Ecclesiology*, 8.

In spite of this, Bishop Kallistos argues, somewhat surprisingly, given the prominence of ecclesiology in Orthodoxy, that even his own tradition 'has not redeemed its promise of creating a full-scale theology of the Church'.[874] We would suggest that it is within this context that one needs to interpret Staniloae's contribution to the Orthodox understanding of the Body of Christ.

In the following pages we will analyse Staniloae's development of the doctrine of the Church, particularly through the lens of our perichoretic model.

10.1 The Place of Ecclesiology in Staniloae's Theology

According to Ica[875], at the centre of Staniloae's theology stands a trilogy consisting of his *Dogmatics*, his *Mystical Theology*,[876] and his *Liturgical Theology*.[877] This is relevant, for Staniloae never aimed at developing an individualistic, speculative academic theology like that which he believes came to dominate the Christian west at the time of the Enlightenment. His theological method was always an ecclesiological exercise, aimed at transforming the spiritual life of the theologian and of those he served.

Commentators agree that Staniloae's theology in general, and his ecclesiology in particular exhibits a number of important characteristics. It was firstly *patristic*[878] – he argues on the basis of patristic texts, particularly those of John Chrysostom, Gregory of Nyssa, Gregory of Nazianzus, Cyril of Alexandria, Maximus the Confessor, John of Damascus and Gregory Palamas.

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[874] Kallistos of Diokleia, 'Incarnation and the Church', unpublished lecture, International Charismatic Consultation on World Evangelisation, Prague, August 23–27, 2000, as quoted in Kärkkäinen, Ecclesiology, 19.

[875] Ica, *PC*, XXVI.

[876] D. Staniloae, *Spiritualitatea ortodoxa* (Bucuresti: EIBMBOR, 1981) (published as the third volume of the *Handbook of Orthodox Moral Theology*. A sign of great interest shown in this book is the fact that it was republished in three different versions after 1990. The first, keeping the old title, adds the subtitle *Ascetica si Mistica* (Bucuresti: EIBMBOR, 1992). The second reprint bears the title *Ascetica si mistica ortodoxa*, 2 vol. (Alba Iulia: Deisis, 1993). The third reprint is unique, in the sense that it reproduces the lectures given by Staniloae on this topic at the Faculty of Theology in Bucharest in the years 1946–1947. Its title is *Ascetica si mistica crestina sau Teologia vietii spirituale* (Cluj: Casa cartii de stiinta, 1993).

[877] D. Staniloae, *Spiritualitate si comuniune în liturghia ortodoxa* (Craiova: Editura Mitropoliei Olteniei, 1986).

[878] Bria, *Spatiul nemuririi sau Eternizarea umanului in Dumnezeu in viziunea teologica a Parintelui Staniloae* (Iasi: Trinitas, 1994) 8.

Then, as we have shown in the second section of our study, Staniloae's theology is thoroughly *trinitarian*. At the same time, it is profoundly *Romanian* – it is engaged and seeks to address the burning issues in Romanian society from the perspective of the Orthodox faith that is shared by most Romanians.[879]

Fourthly, Staniloae's main approach to theology was *dialogical*. He interacted often with other Orthodox theologians, but also with theologians from the Catholic and the Protestant traditions.[880]

Fifthly, and more so after 1967, when he became more engaged personally in ecumenical meetings, Staniloae's theology was characterised by an *ecumenical* spirit.[881] Whilst he continued to insist that the Orthodox Church was the only true Church, he was nonetheless ready to engage in dialogue with theologians from other traditions in order to formulate solutions for healing the divisions that exist in the Body of Christ.

Finally, Staniloae's theology was *contemporary*.[882] This does not mean, explains Louth that he was concerned, like Tillich for instance had been, with 'an engagement between modern thought and theology, in which modern thought posed questions to which the resources of theology endeavoured to find answers'. No Orthodox theologian has ever gone so far. Rather, Staniloae was concerned with 'an engagement that takes place within his own mind and heart – and if there, in the minds and hearts of those who engage with what he says – minds and hearts shaped by an experience of the modern world'.[883] It is with this kind of attitude that Staniloae approaches his formulation of the doctrine of the Church.

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[879] His commitment to the Romanian nation is evident in works like: *Ortodoxie si Romanism* (Sibiu: Editura arhidiecezana, 1939) and *Reflexii despre spiritualitatea poporului roman* (Craiova: Scrisul romanesc, 1992).

[880] He interacts with many modern theologians: Orthodox, such as Khomiakov, Karmiris, Evdokimov, Florovski, Zizioulas and Meyendorff; Catholics, for example de Lubac, Nygren and Kung; and Protestants, including Barth, Berkmann and Belnert.

[881] R. G. Roberson, 'Ecumenism in the Thought of Dumitru Staniloae' in T Damian (ed.), *The Theological Legacy of Dumitru Staniloae and its Ecumenical Actuality* (New York: The Romanian Institute of Orthodox Theology and Spirituality, 1999), 43–53.

[882] During most of his life, Staniloae was engaged in commenting on the most important events in Romanian society in general and on the ecclesiastical scene in particular from a theological perspective. As Meyendorff writes, he was 'open to the legitimate concerns of contemporary Christian thought' – J. Meyendorff, 'Foreword' in Staniloae, *TC*, 7.

[883] Louth, 'Review Essay', 261.

Staniloae places ecclesiology within a wider discussion of the saving work of Christ, between its objective and subjective aspects, as the context in which the latter takes place.[884] Then, he devotes a very large section of his *Dogmatics* to the holy mysteries,[885] which, we contend, is symptomatic of a certain sacramentalist tendency in Orthodox ecclesiology, including Staniloae's. In fact, we may fairly say that Staniloae's sacramental theology constitutes a completely separate entity in his *Dogmatics*. Given its extension, in comparison to Staniloae's formulation of general ecclesiology, it deserves a separate study. This is the reason why we have decided not to include it in the scope of our present research.

The fact that Staniloae deals with the doctrine of the Church before handling the subjective appropriation of salvation is indicative of the fact that in the Orthodox perspective personal salvation cannot be conceived of as an individualistic endeavour, nor is it the result of mere personal initiative. Rather, for the Orthodox the Church is the necessary and inescapable context for the personal appropriation of salvation.[886] This soteriological *taxis* is not an Orthodox invention. It represents the perspective of the ancient church, as a similar order can be found in the Nicaeo-Constantinopolitan Creed.[887]

As we shall see below, the general characteristics of Orthodox ecclesiology outlined by Kärkkäinen also apply to Staniloae's understanding of the ecclesial community: (1) the Church seen as an image of the Trinity; (2) the presence of a vivid consciousness of community; and (3) the relation of humanity to creation.[888]

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[884] Commentators have debated whether the structure of Staniloae's Dogmatics is not 'too reliant on the structures of older Orthodox dogmatics… However, writes Louth, he had 'to start somewhere and no one else attempted what Fr. Dumitru has achieved'. In any case, this outline does not make his dogmatics scholastic. It remains a mystical neo-patristic exercise. As Louth puts it, 'nothing much hangs on the structure: it does not clothe a system' – 'Review Essay', 258–259, 265.

[885] The section on the Church covers some hundred pages, while he devotes over two hundred pages to the sacraments (holy mysteries).

[886] We find it interesting that Pannenberg opts for a similar approach. By doing this, he 'challenges the established canons of [western] systematic theologies' – Kärkkäinen, *Ecclesiology*, 12.

[887] In the creed, the statement 'we believe… in one holy catholic and apostolic church' comes before 'we confess one baptism for the forgiveness of sins…' – for a thorough discussion of the creeds, see the classic work of P. Schaff (ed.) and D. S. Schaff (rev.), *The Creeds of Christendom. With A History and Critical Notes*, 3 vols. (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1983[6]) and the more recent J. Pelikan, *Credo. Historical and Theological Guide to Creeds and Confessions of Faith in the Christian Tradition* (New Haven: YUP, 2003).

[888] Kärkkäinen, *Ecclesiology*, 19–20.

The Church is a profound mystery. This is a fundamental biblical statement (Eph. 5:32, *NKJV*). It means, among other things, that her nature cannot be exhaustively explained and that using a merely scholastic or rationalistic approach would not do justice to it.

The mysterious nature of the Church is due to at least three reasons. Firstly, her head, Jesus Christ (Eph. 5:23) is divine and reason cannot penetrate the depths of divinity. Secondly, she is 'the Body of Christ' (Eph. 5:30). As such, she is made up of human persons, who are themselves mysterious entities called to relate perichoretically to each other, as we have already suggested earlier. Thus the true nature of this human community is equally impenetrable for the human mind left to itself. Finally, the Church is a theo-anthropic reality[889] and if her components cannot be fully understood rationally, it is even harder to imagine that the mind could account in any meaningful way for the mystical inter-relation of the human and the divine, the created and the Creator.

This does not mean, however, that all human rationality is useless in such an endeavour. Were that the case, our own study would be futile. Nevertheless, we begin our research with modest objectives. After we have undertaken our cataphatic attempt to the best of our abilities, we will discover that we have barely scratched the surface of this mystery, 'which has been hidden from ages and from generations but now has been revealed to his saints' (Col. 1:26, *NKJV*).

For such reasons biblical authors themselves resorted to images and metaphors, rather than giving logical definitions, when talking about the Church, as we have seen already in the first part of our study. Moreover, it also means that ecclesial communion 'is not reducible to sociological categories or to strictly historical and political evaluations'.[890] This is also why we are using our perichoretic model, which, we suggest, is better suited than a scholastic approach to investigating the nature of the Church. Such issues are germane to our study of Staniloae's ecclesiology.

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[889] For reasons of gender sensitivity we prefer to avoid the term 'theandric', although this is in fact the one used by Staniloae.

[890] Forte, *Icon*, 64.

10.2 Pentecost and the Beginning of the Church

In a similar manner to the Fathers, Staniloae views the Church as the result of the fifth and final saving act of the Trinity, begun with incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection and ascension.[891]

Obviously, Pentecost is first and foremost the Holy Spirit's event; yet it is implicitly connected to Christ. Kärkkäinen[892] argues that ecclesiologies have traditionally been built on one or the other of the two classical rules: that of Ignatius of Antioch, according to which the ecclesiality of a certain body of believers has to be defined in reference to Christ,[893] or that of Irenaeus, for whom the decisive factor is the presence of the Spirit of God.[894] Yet, there may be a better solution, particularly favoured by the Eastern Fathers, that of defining the Church in relation to the Trinity.

In his ecclesiology, Staniloae is constantly reacting to what he believes to be a certain discontinuity between the ecclesiology of western Christianity (smaller, although significant enough, in the case of the Catholics and larger in the case of the Protestants) and the consistently trinitarian ecclesiology of the (Eastern) Church Fathers.

Protestant ecclesiologies, believes Staniloae, by overemphasising the role of the Spirit, have weakened the visible character of the Church'.[895] This position may very well have been a reaction to an overemphasis on the visible character of the Church in Catholic theology. Catholic ecclesiologies, insisting on the Christological foundation at the expense of the pneumatological, have given the Church 'an institutional character, rather than a sanctifying and a deifying one'.[896] Forte admits that 'the development of Catholic ecclesiology on the threshold of the twentieth century was more the fruit of reactions and defensiveness than the joyful and liberating announcement of the "mystery" hidden for centuries and revealed in Christ'.[897]

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[891] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:195.

[892] Kärkkäinen, *Ecclesiology*, 23.

[893] Ignatius, *Letter to the Smyrneans*, 8.2.

[894] Irenaeus, *Adversus Haereses*, 3.24.1.

[895] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:195.

[896] In the sense of *theosis*. Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:196.

[897] B. Forte, *The Church: Icon of the Trinity. A Brief Study* (Boston: St. Paul, 1991) 15.

Staniloae rejects equally strongly the Catholic position according to which the Church is juridically founded on the cross. In Staniloae's opinion, this is based on a static and forensic understanding of salvation and overlooks the role of the Holy Spirit in founding the Church.[898] Staniloae prefers a more balanced approach in which the roles of both Christ and the Spirit are taken equally into consideration. A similar position is expressed by Pannenberg, who argues that 'the Christological constitution and the pneumatological constitution belong together, because the Spirit and the Son mutually indwell one another as trinitarian persons'.[899] In stating this, in our opinion, the author implicitly validates our use of a perichoretic model in ecclesiology.

As we have already asserted, according to Staniloae, the Church plays an essential role in the process of salvation, both in terms of humanity and of creation as a whole: 'The Church, present virtually in the body of Christ, receives her actual being through the irradiation of the Holy Spirit from his body into the other human beings... Without the Church, the saving work of Christ could not have been accomplished'.[900]

Furthermore, in Staniloae's *Dogmatics* and in Orthodox theology in general the doctrine of the Church is closely connected with the doctrines of creation and of *theosis*. In this sense, the Church is the first-fruit and the agent through which creation is progressively deified, i.e. united to the Incarnate Son of God through the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. Without Pentecost, neither the forming of the Church nor the final reconciliation of creation in Christ could be imagined.

10.2.1 The Unity between the Works of Christ and the Spirit

It has been suggested that western ecclesiology, at least before Vatican II, 'in the main is built on Christological concepts', while Eastern Orthodox ecclesiology is more 'Spirit-sensitive'.[901] Yet the works of Christ and of the Holy Spirit cannot be separated or viewed in terms of one replacing the other, although neither should they be confused. Staniloae argues that 'the image of Christ in heaven and that of the Holy Spirit in the Church is a false one, because it does not take seriously into consideration the unity of

[898] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:196–7, n. 1.

[899] Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 3:16–17.

[900] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:196.

[901] Kärkkäinen, *Ecclesiology*, 17. The Orthodox author N. A. Nissiotis describes Catholicism as being 'Christomonistic' –, 'Pneumatologie ou "Christomonisme" dans la tradition latine?', *Ephemerides Theologicae Lovanienses*, 45, 1969, 394–416.

the trinitarian persons'. This would lead, argues Staniloae, either to a logical replacement of the 'absent Christ' with the Pope, as in Catholicism or to individualism, by taking one's feelings for impulses of the Holy Spirit, as in Protestantism.[902] In contrast to this, Orthodoxy aims for a more balanced understanding of the role of Christ and the Spirit in the Church, based on the primacy of the person of the Father in the functional structure of the Trinity.

Nevertheless, balance does not imply uniformity. Thus following Evdokimov,[903] Staniloae sees a change in the dynamics of the Son and the Spirit taking place around the Pentecost event. Before this event the Holy Spirit related to people only in and through Christ, while after Pentecost Christ related to people only in and through the Holy Spirit. Making this point, he feels compelled to add: 'We do not have to believe that the Holy Spirit and Christ are exchanging places from first to second and thus from the role of mediator to mediated'. Although this appears to contradict the words of Evdokimov, in fact what Staniloae is intending to do is to safeguard himself from what he views as the mistaken western ecclesiologies, which view Christ as 'distanced or less felt' after Pentecost.[904]

The same is true when Staniloae speaks of the discrete presence of the Spirit in the believer. Although at the level of our 'senses' we perceive the Spirit as having primacy, this is so not because of the place the Spirit really has but in order for the Spirit to better make the presence of Christ felt in us.[905] This view of the self-effacing character of the Spirit is not only sound theologically but is also one of the clearest pneumatological themes in the teaching of Christ (Jn. 15:26).

As Roberson rightly points out, according to Staniloae,

> the outpouring of the Holy Spirit through the risen body of Christ is possible because after the resurrection his body was freed of all impediments which could obscure the Spirit's shining from it. Because of the full transparency of the

[902] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:197.

[903] P. Evdokimov, *L'Esprit Saint dans la tradition orthodoxe* (Paris: Cerf, 1969) 90.

[904] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:202–203.

[905] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:200.

> pneumatized body of Christ, it becomes the medium of the Holy Spirit's communication of the divine energies to humanity.[906]

The Spirit can do this in us because as a *hypostasis* He is united with Christ also in Christ's human nature, which includes our human nature: 'Christ is the central, fundamental hypostasis of all human beings. As such, the hypostasis of the Spirit, united with him also in his human nature, can be extended into all humanity.'[907] Thus because of the incarnation of the divine Logos, the Spirit can also work in human beings united with Christ through faith, to bring them to the likeness of Christ, in the context of the ecclesial community.

We can observe somewhat similar perspectives on the equal roles of Christ and the Spirit in the Church among some post-Vatican II Catholic theologians. Thus Forte writes: 'the Son's mission culminates in the sending of the Spirit: through Christ, the Spirit makes possible our access to the Father. Just as the Father through the Son comes to us in the Spirit, so too we in the Spirit through the Son can now have access to the Father'.[908] This beautiful expression of the way in which the descent of the Spirit makes possible our spiritual ascent to the Father comes very close to the Orthodox understanding of deification, and does so without all the intricacies of the Orthodox neo-Palamite paradigm.

One of the most important 'Christological' works of the Holy Spirit in the believer is that of transforming her progressively according to the image of the Son, i.e. making her into an adopted child of the Father. In this, the Son and the Spirit are again indissolubly related.

Staniloae argues that just as Christ is mystically present in the Church through the Holy Spirit and, at the same time seated at the right hand of the Father on the throne of glory, so in the same manner the Holy Spirit, who has 'irradiated' as divine *hypostasis* at Pentecost, 'remains permanently in this irradiation'. The Church has the Holy Spirit and she also asks continually for the Paraclete, 'through prayer and abstention from sins'.[909] This formulation of the 'already but not yet' aspect of the

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[906] Roberson, *CROE*, 49.

[907] Staniloae, 2:205.

[908] Forte, *Icon*, 26.

[909] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:203–204.

presence of Christ and the Spirit is introducing implicitly the idea of the eschatological dimension of the Church.

10.2.2 The Church: Reflection of the Trinity

The works of Christ and of the Holy Spirit in the Church, insists Staniloae, cannot be separated from the work of the Father, for it is through the Spirit that we call Christ 'Lord' and God 'our Father'. The same Spirit is transforming us into the likeness of Christ, making us sons of the Father. 'The Spirit comes to us as bearer of the infinite love of the Father towards his Son'.[910]

Staniloae believes that the Church is called to reproduce historically and humanly the communion that exists eternally between the persons of the Holy Trinity.[911] The concept of *perichoresis* becomes central – although only implicitly – in this definition of the Church as reflection of the Trinity. Thus Staniloae writes in one of his patristic commentaries: '[The Church] is the reciprocal interiority of those abiding in the reciprocal interiority of the persons of the Holy Trinity, which is brought about in us through Christ who became human'.[912] This statement is, in our opinion, a strong confirmation for the legitimacy of the use of our perichoretic model for analysing Staniloae's understanding of ecclesiology.

This perspective is not unique to Orthodox theology. This is how Forte summarises the post-Vatican II perception of this reality as it is expressed in *Lumen gentium*: 'the Church comes from the Trinity, is structured in the image of the Trinity and journeys toward the trinitarian fulfilment of history'.[913] Then, adds de Margerie, the *agape* love that bonds the persons of the Trinity is to be reflected in the way the human members of the Church relate to each other, for 'the Church is a communion of persons

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[910] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:200. We need to mention at this point that the use of gender sensitive language is not a feature of Orthodox theology and that we have decided to conform to the convention simply for reasons of authenticity, in spite of our more 'sensitive' convictions.

[911] For an Evangelical attempt at constructing a free-church trinitarian ecclesiology rooted in the concept of community, see M. Volf, *After Our Likeness. The Church as the Image of the Trinity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998). The author develops his approach in dialogue with the Orthodox ecclesiology of Zizioulas and the Catholic ecclesiology of Ratzinger.

[912] Sf. Atanasie cel Mare, *Scrieri II*, D. Staniloae (tr.) (Bucuresti: EIBMBOR, 1988) 85, n. 159a.

[913] Forte, *Icon*, 10.

which is able to imitate the loving communion between the divine persons and is obligated thereto'.[914]

De Margerie also argues that in terms of the relationship between the Church and the Trinity, Augustine recovered Cyprian's conception according to which the communion of the faithful in the church flows from the trinitarian community. He adds that this represents a 'notable progress', because Augustine shows us in the Spirit the 'substantial and consubstantial charity' of the Father and the Son.[915]

Given the Holy Spirit's role in the Holy Trinity, as the Spirit of communion between the other two persons of the Godhead, Staniloae argues that, in the same manner, the Holy Spirit creates communion between the human members of the Body of Christ. Because Christ and the Holy Spirit are one, they contribute together to the unity of the Church. And since they are not impersonal forces but divine persons, Christ and the Spirit do not produce uniformity but maintain and develop the identities of the human persons (seen also in the individual flames of fire coming on the apostles), transforming the Body of Christ into a new community living in harmony (or 'symphony', as Staniloae likes to call it). In this sense, Pentecost becomes a reversal of Babel.[916] The dissonance of sin and rebellion gives way progressively to the eschatological harmony of the kingdom.

The divine dynamics around the Pentecost event (with the ascension of Christ and the coming of the Holy Spirit) had a major impact on the Church. Staniloae explains, exegeting a passage from Gregory Palamas that the Holy Spirit could not descend until 'Christ, ascending to the Father as a man, had his body filled by the Holy Spirit, in the same way as the Father or as himself as God is.' As a result, 'from his body, totally pneumatised now, the Holy Spirit irradiates and penetrates the hearts of those who believe'.[917] This makes the believers share in the 'intimacy of God's infinite love', through the Holy Spirit, who mediates Christ to the faithful. Thus 'the Spirit comes to us as bearer of the infinity of the Father's love towards the Son'.

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[914] Margerie, *Christian Trinity*, 292.

[915] *Christian Trinity*, 117. Margerie refers to Augustine, *In Jo*. 105, 3, *ML* 35. 1904 d. He follows in this statement the comment made by P. Smulders in 'Esprit Saint', *Dictionnaire de spiritualité ascétique et mystique*, Paris, 1960, 4:1280–1282.

[916] Staniloae, *TC*, 53; and *TDO*, 2:206.

[917] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:199.

The divine power at the origin of the Church is seen by Staniloae in the mighty wind associated with the tongues of fire at Pentecost (Acts 2:2). This is how he expresses the implications of this phenomenon:

> The Church was born as a reality not out of a limited worldly power and with a transient worldly power but out of a heavenly power that she will carry within herself, communicating it to the world. A human community was born, which had God's Incarnated Son as foundation and as the one who bears her, through whom the unending love of God is communicated to the world; there came into being the reality of a community whose powers will have no end, because she will draw them constantly from God's infinity, through the human body of the divine *Hypostasis*. That is a reality or [better said] a community which represented 'heaven on earth', the incarnated Word, abiding in her with his power ever deifying and unifying.[918]

After presenting Staniloae's position on the origin and source of the Church, we move now to the way he elaborates his discussion of the nature of the Church.

10.3 The Theandric Constitution of the Church

The Church is for Staniloae the result of two indispensable and synergic activities: first, the divine initiative and action in the Christ event and then the human response, in obedience and sacrifice. He refuses both a docetic ecclesiology (based exclusively on the divine action) and a sociological one (which views the Church as a free association of separated entities looking to Christ as their model). This is true not only in terms of the origin of the Church but also in terms of her actual being. Thus the human and the divine factors are so united in the Church that we cannot speak about one without the other.

The balanced image that Staniloae presents above is very attractive. We will have to examine, however, to what extent he is able to maintain this balance in the way he develops the components of his ecclesiological construction.

[918] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:207.

10.3.1 Humanity United with Christ

When setting out to describe the nature of the Church, Staniloae begins again with creation. 'The Church is the unity of all that exists, or [better said] it is destined to contain all that exists: God and creation'.[919] By making this statement, he is putting ecclesiology in its proper context: God's desire and plan to bring back the whole of creation into unity through Christ. Then, using Buber's terminology,[920] he views the Church as a 'communitary human I in Christ as Thou'. This means in dynamic personalist terms both unity and distinction.

Because in his *hypostasis* Christ has united without confusion and diminution the divine with the human nature, He becomes a 'connecting ring' between God and humanity[921] and because, through the Holy Spirit, Christ is 'extended with his deified body into humanity' the Church becomes a 'connecting ring between God and creation'.[922] The eastern patristic concept of *theosis* plays a central role in this process. 'Thus', writes Bartos, 'the Church is the meeting place between the natural and the supernatural. The process of man's deification, therefore, can continue due to the theandric constitution and the power of sacrifice received from Christ in the Spirit'.[923]

Staniloae speaks in this sense about the 'theandric constitution' of the Church, deliberately avoiding the phrase 'theandric nature',[924] which could easily be understood in monophysite terms. Christ the Head is united in such an intimate way to the Church his Body that we cannot talk about one without the other. At the same time, there is no confusion between the two (the Church never becomes Christ).

10.3.2 The Incarnation Basis of the Church

As we have already affirmed, according to Staniloae, the Church is rooted not just in the cross, as is thought in most western theology but in all five 'saving acts of the Trinity':

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[919] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:208.

[920] Staniloae does not mention if he borrowed this terminology from the Jewish philosopher. This happens, perhaps, suggests Louth, 'because the immediate influence on him [in this sense] was [that of] the ideas of the Russian émigrés, not least Nicholas Berdyaev – 'Review Essay', 261.

[921] As we have seen in the chapter on anthropology, this is similar to (and the model for) humanity being the 'connecting ring' between God and the rest of creation.

[922] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:208–209.

[923] Bartos, *DEOT*, 333.

[924] In this, the author distances himself again from Karmiris – Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:208, n. 20.

incarnation, crucifixion, resurrection, ascension and Pentecost.[925] However, as Bartos rightly observes, this does not mean that the five acts are 'equally weighted'.[926] To be more precise, of all the five, the incarnation becomes for Staniloae the pivotal saving act of God, which makes the Church become God's means of 'finalising the saving action that began with the incarnation'.[927]

The incarnation represents the first basis of the unity between Christ and the Church, because 'in order to be head of the Church Christ has to have something in common with those that constitute his body'. At the same time, to be head, He needs something different, which is his divinity.[928] There is then between Christ and the Church both 'an infinite difference' and a real 'fit'.[929] We have to underline again, at this point the subtlety and the persuasive nature of the argument, as well as its aesthetic value. In other words, it is *beautiful*; this is something often neglected in western theology, which may be why theological treatises appear sometimes to be so dry and unimaginative.

This reciprocal meetness of the divine Logos and of humanity constitutes the basis for the hypostatic union of the two natures in the person of Jesus Christ. On this basis, Christ as head of the Church establishes a real dialogue with the humanity united with him. Staniloae calls this a 'symphonic partnership'.[930]

Christ as the head of the Church is open to the infinite light and life of God, which He communicates to his Church'.[931] At the same time, He is not only head of the Church but also head of the whole creation that He came to transfigure. The difference

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[925] Staniloae, TDO, 2:195.

[926] Bartos, *DEOT*, 332.

[927] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:195.

[928] At this point Staniloae does not miss the opportunity to reject once again the legitimacy of the Pope as head of the Church. This follows because 'the members that constitute [the body] being equal, do not accept easily the unity under a head from among them, because no one opens to them a horizon beyond themselves, nor raises them unto this horizon or connects them with the powers of the infinite life'. This does not exclude humans from being heads over others but only as 'types of the real head', without pretending to the existence of an ontological difference. Such a picture, present in the synodical ecclesiological model, believes Staniloae, is much more consistent with the theandric constitution of the Church – *TDO*, 2:216–217.

[929] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:213–214.

[930] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:216.

[931] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:213.

is that his unity with the Church is a personal one, while the nature of the unity between him and creation is not personal.[932]

Staniloae does not view the Church as a reality opposed to the natural order but as something containing and transcending it, through the power of the Spirit working in the deified body of Christ. This is what makes the Church both open to and a partaker in the divine infinity present in Christ's body.[933]

However, what makes Christ head of the Church is, according to Staniloae who follows in this the Church Fathers, not just the incarnation, or the crucifixion, or the resurrection but all these three events closely inter-related. The incarnation laid the first part of the foundation, while the crucifixion and the resurrection have perfected Christ's preparatory work for bringing the Church into being.[934]

10.3.3 The Sacrificial Basis of the Church

The second basis of Christ's headship over the Church is, according to Staniloae, Christ's life of obedience and sacrifice on the cross. In these, Staniloae sees the example and the driving force for a life of obedience and sacrifice for the believer. Here is another point of connection with the person of the Father. Following Christ in his sacrificial life, the believer receives from the Father his infinite love in the same way as did his incarnated Son.

The Church shares in the sacrifice of Christ in two major ways. First, through the eucharist, which then paves the way for a permanent sacrificial life, of renunciation to the sins and the passions of the flesh in favour of the constant cultivation of the Christian virtues, not in individual isolation, as Staniloae believes happens in Protestantism but in the Church, in communion with other believers and with Christ in the Holy Spirit. Through these, we are open not only to the Father but also to unity with our neighbours.

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[932] Staniloae argues that, although Christ is a divine person, his relation to the creation is not personal, given the impersonal nature of the creation.

[933] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:218.

[934] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:213.

10.3.4 The Resurrection/Ascension Basis of the Church

The third basis for the unity between Christ and the Church is the resurrection and the ascension of Christ. The resurrection gives the Church an eschatological dimension, making her a first-fruit of the age to come. The Church is thus 'the laboratory of resurrection'.[935] But this does not mean that the Church has no earthly concerns. Staniloae refuses such a docetic approach but he also rejects an exclusive concentration on history. We find here again his perpetual striving for theological balance.

Staniloae does not elaborate on the eschatological dimension of the Church to the extent that Pannenberg does. For the latter, the essence of the Church is constituted by the kingdom, whose sign it is.[936] In suggesting this, Pannenberg does not follow the political implications that Moltmann, for instance, draws from his own eschatological ecclesiology.[937] He insists that Jesus did not announce the gospel of the kingdom as a liberationist political platform but as a message of hope addressed to individuals. Yet by saying this, Pannenberg does not in any way wish to deny, any more than Staniloae, the possible political implications of the presence of the Church in the world.[938]

The ascension made possible the coming of the Spirit through which the Body of Christ is pneumatised, or as Staniloae likes to say, is made 'transparent'. This is done by constant liberation from the slavery of passions and corruption that came upon us because of the fall. 'Transparency' makes it possible for Christ to be seen in each of us and to be communicated to the world.[939] We observe here, as we have previously in other similar passages, the characteristic way in which Staniloae combines dogmatic and mystical themes in his theologising.

Together with the theo-anthropic constitution of the Church, another classic manner of investigating the nature of the Church is through the analysis of the four ecclesiologic marks present in the Nicaeo-Constantinopolitan Creed, according to which

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[935] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:226.

[936] Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 3:30–33.

[937] See his discussion of 'The Trinitarian Doctrine of Freedom' that forms the conclusion of his book *The Trinity and the Kingdom*, 212–222. Moltmann describes his own theology as having a biblical basis, an eschatological orientation and a political engagement – *History*, 182.

[938] Pannenberg, *Systematic Theology*, 3:98.

[939] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:227–228.

the Church is one, holy, catholic and apostolic. We present below in succinct fashion Staniloae's essential understanding of these four characteristics of the body of Christ.

10.4 The Marks of the Church

Staniloae views the four traditional marks of the Church as being based in the theandric constitution of the Church.[940] At the same time, admittedly following Karmiris,[941] he sees them as 'closely united and somewhat interpenetrated' – a new implicit evidence for his perichoretic understanding of the ecclesial body of Christ.[942]

10.4.1 Unity

Staniloae argues that the unity of the Church is rooted in the unity of the divine persons in the Holy Trinity.[943] As such, it is not primarily the result of human efforts but it is a gift of God that the Church is called to actualise. In his own words: 'In the same manner in which the three persons [of the Godhead] cannot be separated from their loving unity, also the Church of God cannot be separated [in herself], nor can her faithful members [be separated] from one another, in the depth of their being'.[944] This is so because 'outside of God unity is not possible and thus neither salvation'.[945] In the former statement, Staniloae again makes a close connection between the Church, particularly her unity, and the salvation of individual believers.

Staniloae believes that the foundation stone for the unity of the Church is the person of Christ himself:

> Where is Christ, there is unity, because where is Christ there is the love that wants to embrace all in him and present them before the Father. Therefore, unity cannot be obtained but by being rooted in Christ, Who is the Word of God that become

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[940] This is the classic ontological approach of the 'marks', used as adjectives describing the nature of the Church. In contrast to this, one missiologist argues that the *notae ecclesiae*, as the Reformers called them, are better read as adverbs, suggesting the missional engagement of the Church as a unifying, sanctifying, reconciling and proclaiming community – C. van Engen, *God's Missionary People. Rethinking the Purpose of the Local Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1991) 66.

[941] J. Karmiris, *Η ορθοδοξος Εκκλήσιολογια* (Athens, 1973) 236.

[942] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:255.

[943] In a similar manner, McGrath insists that unity 'must not be understood *sociologically* or *organisationally* but *theologically*'– *Christian Theology*, 420.

[944] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:258.

[945] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:256.

> accessible to us through incarnation, in order to bring us all back into his unity. Division is the sign of coming out of this unchanged and unitary foundation, of adhering to changing and varied provisionality, as to the sole [ultimate] reality.[946]

He argues, in a manner similar to the Catholic Church, that since there is only one Christ, there is only one true Church. And, obviously, that true one is, the Orthodox Church.[947] As we have shown already, this does not mean that for Staniloae the 'non-Orthodox churches are devoid of any ecclesial reality. They are viewed as related to the one Church but as weaker, incomplete manifestations of that which is fully present in the Orthodox Church'.[948]

A similar position is expressed by Florovsky, who declares that he feels 'compelled to regard all other Christian churches as deficient'. Yet, he argues that in spite it, the Orthodox should avoid any arrogance and triumphalism, because not 'everything in the past or present state of the Orthodox Church is to be equated with the truth of God. Many things are obviously changeable; indeed, many things need improvement. The *true* Church is not yet the *perfect* Church'.[949]

For Staniloae, the unity of the Church is not something extra, added to and distinct from the being of the Church, either institutionally (as, he believes, is the case in Catholicism) or voluntarily, between individuals with various beliefs and various interpretations of the faith (as, he argues, is the case in Protestantism). It is rather 'an ontological-pneumatic [reality] in Christ and in his Holy Spirit'.[950]

The foundational principle of this unity is, according to Staniloae, the same as in the internal dynamic of the Trinity, i.e. the person of the Holy Spirit. Her unifying

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[946] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:256–257.

[947] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:268. Küng would count this as the fourth of his 'evasions' from the unacceptable reality of church disunity, describing it as 'saying that there is only one empirical Church identical with the Church of Christ, which does not recognise any of the other Churches as Churches'. The other three 'evasions' are: (1) to retreat from the disunited visible Church to an undivided Church'; (2) 'to see the divisions in the Church as a normal divinely intended development'; and (3) 'to regard the different Churches that have arisen as a result of schism as the three of four branches of the one tree' – *The Church* (Garden City, NY: Image, 1976) 364–366.

[948] Roberson, 'Ecumenism', 43; Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:267. For an Evangelical view of the marks of the Church, see T. George, 'What I'd Like to Tell the Pope About the Church', *Christianity Today*, 42, 7, 15 June 1998, 41–44.

[949] G. Florovsky, 'The True Church' in *Ecumenism I: A Doctrinal Approach, Collected Works of Georges Florovsky*, 13 (Vaduz and Belmont, MA: Büchervertriebsanstalt, 1989) 134, as quoted in Behr, 'Trinitarian Being', 79.

[950] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:262.

activity was manifested for the first time when the Spirit constituted the Church at Pentecost but it is also permanently manifested as a 'unifying energy' and works to create love and holiness in and between the members of the Body.[951] She also, 'through her divine fluidity, re-establishes the weakened unity existing among the various elements of the structure of creation'.[952] In this way the author again gives a holistic dimension to the Church's role in the economy of salvation.

The kind of unity that the Spirit works in the Church is not one of uniformity, although ontologically all the members are equal but a unity in the diversity of the different spiritual gifts communicated to the individual members for the building up of the Body. This eliminates all possibility of fragmentation, because the same Spirit who diversifies is also the Spirit who unites.[953]

According to Fr. Staniloae, the truth that the Church is one has to be expressed in three equally important ways: in the dogma, in the sacraments and in the hierarchy.

The first very important way of expressing the unity of the Church is through unity of dogma, because it is 'based on the same experience of Christ working through the Holy Spirit in all her parts and members'. This is why, in their ecumenical involvements, the Orthodox are inflexible in dogmatic matters, for explains Staniloae, to deny any dogma is identical to denying Christ some of his works in the Church and depriving him of a 'fully salvific effectiveness in the Church and in her members'.[954]

For the same reason the Orthodox theologians do not make a distinction between capital and secondary dogma 'in the same way that you cannot take out of the structure of a building the materials of lesser importance without leading the whole building to collapse'.[955] At the same time, they make a distinction between (1) *dogma* – absolute universal truths which are the unchanging foundation of the Church; (2) *theologoumena* – theological constructions on secondary matters, on which we witness in the history of

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[951] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:258.

[952] Staniloae, 'The Holy Spirit and the Sobornicity of the Church' in D. Staniloae, *Theology and the Church* (Crestwood, NY: St. Vladimir's Seminary Press, 1980) 69.

[953] Staniloae, 'Sfîntul Duh si sobornicitatea Bisericii', *Ortodoxia*, 19, 1967, 45.

[954] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:265. This is one area where, at least in principle, Evangelicals agree wholeheartedly with the Orthodox – see, D. G. Bloesch, *The Church. Sacraments, Worship, Ministry, Mission* (Downers Grove: IVP, 2002) 43–45.

[955] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:264.

the Church a larger degree of flexibility; and (3) *opinions* – private convictions having to do with issues about which the Church has not yet pronounced. It is only in areas (2) and (3) that the Orthodox allow for diversity, while expecting total uniformity in matters having to do with (1).

Roberson explains that Staniloae's position about the incomplete nature of the non-Orthodox churches is closely connected to their supposedly faulty understanding of dogma. Thus 'because Staniloae sees a mutual influence between doctrine and experience, distorted or incomplete doctrine is understood as an indication of an imperfect experience of the Trinity in the Church'.[956]

For the unity of the Church to be more than an abstraction, it also has to be expressed through a sacramental unity. For reasons that are both biblical and theological, the eucharist is, according to Staniloae, the supreme sacrament and a means to maintaining and strengthening the unity of the Church. He believes that 'only where is the Church, there is the eucharist and only where is the eucharist, there is the Church'.[957] This does not mean, however, that the eucharist is the only sacrament that works towards the unity of the Church. For instance, in order to have access to the eucharist, the believers have to mount the previous two steps, those of baptism and chrismation. Also, if they have committed sins, they have to go through the sacrament of Repentance, including confession and penance.

The sacraments are in Orthodoxy a means by which the believers are united with Christ through the uncreated grace coming from the divine persons. Staniloae believes that in Catholicism these means of unity are weakened, because Roman-Catholic theology speaks about the believers receiving in the sacraments only a created grace. This is why, in his opinion, their unity has had to be maintained institutionally and juridically, through the Pope. At the same time, 'Protestantism, unsatisfied with such a non spiritual and rather external unity of the Church, has reduced the relation with Christ to a mere relation of the believer with him through faith. But this faith, not

[956] Roberson, 'Ecumenism', 44.

[957] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:259. The author explains that his position is rooted in the theology of Cyril of Alexandria and Ignatius of Antioch.

having as a source the bodily presence of Christ in the Church, has been emptied to a large extent of power and content, becoming more a voluntary subjective act...'[958]

Then, asks Staniloae, what can be said about the other Christian denominations, which 'do not testify to such an intimate and effective unity with Christ' as the Orthodox? His response is: 'We reckon that they are imperfect churches, some closer, others less close to perfection.' Based on this conviction, he rejects the opinions expressed by Metropolitan Plato of Kiev, according to whom all denominations are equal components of the same one Church. He believes that in one sense the Church contains in herself all the denominations that have separated from her, since they could not separate completely from the Tradition present in her. In another sense, however, the only Church in the plenary sense of the word is the Orthodox Church.[959]

Let us now discuss the second mark of the Church in the understanding of Staniloae.

10.4.2 Holiness

The dynamics of the intra-trinitarian life forms the underlying basis for this second mark of the Church. Roberson again summarises very well the position held by Staniloae: 'Christ is holy because of the divinity of his hypostasis. His assumed humanity was deified and made holy when the Holy Spirit united it to his divinity. Holiness was then communicated by the Spirit to members of the Church who are united to Christ's deified humanity'.[960]

The holiness in the Church, understood in a moral sense, has, according to Staniloae, its first source in Christ's sacrifice for all. The individual believer and the Church as a whole are impregnated with this holiness, understood as the opposite of sin, to the extent to which they are united with Christ intimately and unmediatedly. Staniloae again presents the Orthodox position in polemic terms. He sees the imparting of holiness weakened in the other major Christian denominations: in Protestantism, because the belief in the intimate and effective presence of Christ has been weakened

[958] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:261.

[959] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:267–268.

[960] Roberson, *CROE*, 77.

(which also affected the unity of the Church) and in Catholicism because of, among other things, the mediation of the created grace imparted through the sacraments.[961]

The holiness rooted in the Cross is intimately related to the relational and communitarian dimension of holiness, because only a spirit of self-giving and self-denial makes possible a real community life in which unity of purpose is balanced by the infinite variety of the gifts manifested by those who participate in it.

The first step towards holiness is made by the believers in the sacrament of baptism. Following that, divine grace forms them into 'a royal priesthood, a *holy* nation' (1 Pet. 2:9). At this point the author presents the paradoxical nature of holiness in the believer and in the Church. Through baptism, the believer is made holy unto God but at the same time he is beginning a process in which, through asceticism, prayer and fellowship, he separates himself from sin and grows constantly in holiness until he is made perfect at the Second Coming of Christ. This accounts for the apparent discrepancy between the affirmed holiness of the Church and the obvious imperfections and weaknesses of the visible Church.[962] However, the discrepancy observed cannot be allowed to be too great, or it will become a denial of the holiness of the Church.

Staniloae understands the holiness of the Church as 'a mission having an eschatological perspective' in which the Holy Spirit plays an essential role. This is why he describes Pentecost as 'the starting point of holiness' and as implying an 'eschatological tension'.[963] The Church is thus seen as 'the laboratory of resurrection', the place where 'the Spirit of Christ makes us holy, or [in other words] more perfect images of Christ, in whom is concentrated in one person the holiness and love of the Holy Trinity'.[964]

Closely related to this aspect is the dynamic of holiness in the Christian community. In describing it, Staniloae borrows from John Clymachus the image of the ladder on which believers are at different levels in their process of sanctification, in such a way that even at the highest place possible no one can exhaust the Church's

[961] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:270. McGrath argues that the term 'holy' in this context 'is theological, not moral, in its connotations' – *Christian Theology*, 423.

[962] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:274.

[963] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:276.

[964] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:275.

reserves of holiness and sanctifying power. At the same time, these differences do not divide the members of the Church but, in fact, 'the spiritual wealth of the ones higher on the ladder is useful also as an example and encouragement for the others'. This explains the attitude of the Orthodox Church in avoiding a rigorist approach to sinners. They are not denied the communion of the Church, with the exception of those who deny her teaching,[965] because they break the unity of the Church. This statement leads us naturally to the next mark of the Church.

10.4.3 Catholicity

As we shall explain in the next chapter, Staniloae prefers to speak about the *sobornicity* of the Church,[966] because he believes that this term expresses in a better manner the qualitative aspect of this mark, avoiding at the same time the limited geographical meaning to which the term *catholicity* leads. It is true that the geographical sense, specific to the western Church from the time of Augustine onwards is not favourable to the Orthodox but it also reduces the mark to an external meaning, which involves dangerous inherent weaknesses. Moreover, we need to recall that for some time, during the Arian debate, the heretic communities could justifiably claim a catholicity that the orthodox obviously did not have. This is only one of the risks of the external and quantitative definition of catholicity to which Orthodox theologians draw attention. At the same time, we have to mention the fact, not mentioned by Staniloae, that post-Vatican II Catholicism approaches the issue of the catholicity of the Church in more flexible and spiritual terms.[967]

For Staniloae, the concept of sobornicity (catholicity) is closely connected to the unity of the Church. It is however not just any kind of unity: 'It is distinguished from an undifferentiated unity by being of a special kind, the unity of communion'.[968]

This Orthodox perspective on the Church's catholicity and unity holds very promising implications for ecumenism.[969] Thus explains Staniloae, in his understanding,

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[965] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:279–280.

[966] From the Slavic term *sobornaya*, meaning both 'universal' and 'conciliar' – Turcescu, 'Eucharistic Ecclesiology', 100.

[967] Dulles argues that it should be understood rather as 'the dynamic catholicity of a love reaching out to all and excluding none' – *Models of the Church*, 122.

[968] Staniloae, *TC*, 56.

sobornicity 'has to be the gathering (*sobor*) of the whole world, where all Christians bring together their understanding of the whole revealed divine reality and of the whole human reality seen in the light of the integral revelation. By doing so, they share their understanding with all and each can participate in the understanding of all'.[970]

Staniloae describes this with the phrase 'open sobornicity'.[971] It entails, explains Roberson, that even if 'any union between churches must be based on the fullness of apostolic teaching… this teaching was handed down in the form of scriptural types and images which admit of different complementary interpretations'. In order for the different churches to be able to arrive at the correct interpretation of the revealed truth, they have to engage in the exercise of open sobornicity, which 'implies mutual communication that results from a continual tension between unity and diversity'.[972] Every Christian tradition engaged in this dialogue contributes 'some valid insight', without however refusing to let its weaknesses be criticised and corrected. The outcome is mutual enrichment and a more harmonious understanding of the truth of faith.

To the geographical meaning of catholicity in western theology, Staniloae opposes an internal and communitarian understanding of sobornicity that reflects the conciliar (or synodal) life of the Church: 'The whole Church is a permanent Synod, a communion, a convergence of and permanent co-operation of all its members...' He believes that sobornicity reflects the nature of the Church's unity: 'It is a unity realised and maintained through the convergence, the communion, the unanimous complementarity of her members, not through a mere juxtaposition or through a fusion of all into a uniform whole'.[973]

Staniloae here agrees with the Roman Catholic theologian Henri de Lubac, who believes that 'the Church was already catholic on the morning of the day of

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[969] See, I. Juhász, 'Dumitru Staniloae's Ecumenical Studies as an Aspect of the Orthodox–Protestant Dialogue', *JES*, 16, 1979, 747–764.

[970] D. Staniloae, 'Sobornicitate deschisa', *Ortodoxia*, 23, 1971, 172.

[971] There are three possible factors that led Staniloae to the formulation of this concept: (1) his understanding of sobornicity; (2) the idea of the variety of spiritual gifts manifested in the different Christian traditions; (3) the notion of 'spiritual intercommunion' the he used first in 1969, as a result of his contact with the ecumenical movement – Turcescu, 'Eucharistic Ecclesiology', 100–101.

[972] Roberson, 'Ecumenism', 49. D. Staniloae, 'Coordonatele ecumenismului din punct de vedere ortodox', *Ortodoxia*, 19, 1967, 517–519.

[973] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:283. Bishop Kallistos, connects this conciliar understanding of ecclesiology to the Orthodox emphasis on the Church as icon of the Trinity – *Orthodox Church*, 241.

Pentecost'.[974] This is so because the Church has Christ wholly and similarly the Holy Spirit, which makes Staniloae believe that the terms 'entirety' (Gr. *holon*) and 'plenitude' better express the full meaning of the word 'catholic'. 'Community and plenitude, these are the two meanings of the Church's characteristic expressed through the term "sobornical" or "catholic"'.[975]

The unity that the different members of the body bring about in the community is the result both of the uniqueness of each member and of the shared work that they accomplish in the Body of Christ. This dynamic sobornicity created through diversity has an eschatological dimension, as the other marks of the Church have, for 'the Church as a whole marches towards an eschatological fullness of the total experience of God in her and of her total integration into God to the point when God will be 'all in all' (1 Co 15:28)'.[976]

The Church is whole, argues Staniloae, because Christ, who is all in all things, lives in her. This kind of plenitude is not yet perfect but only virtual. However, it will be fully actualised in the Eschaton.[977] One of the ways this is done is through its witness to the truth of the Gospel, based on the foundation represented by the apostles of Christ.

10.4.4 Apostolicity

By apostolicity, Staniloae means that the Church was founded by Christ (who is both the founder and the foundation) on the foundation of the apostles' teaching. This means that 'the apostles as a "foundation" do not make useless Christ as a foundation, nor does Christ as a foundation make the apostles useless as an overlaid foundation but it is precisely the apostles... that are making Christ transparent [or seen] as the ultimate foundation...'[978]

The calling to be an apostle, in the New Testament meaning of the word, is a unique, irreplaceable dignity. It cannot be transmitted, because of the unique conditions that the apostles had to meet. However, in the larger sense of the word, every believer and the Church as a whole has to be animated by an apostolic spirit or, in other words,

[974] H. De Lubac, *Le Catholicisme* (Paris, 1938) 26, as quoted in Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:284, n. 113.
[975] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:286.
[976] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:288–289.
[977] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:290.
[978] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:293.

to manifest apostolicity. This is the way that the Gospel of Christ penetrates everywhere and the Church becomes more catholic, in the geographical or quantitative sense of the word. This meaning of apostolicity would be favoured by most Protestants.

The apostolic character of the Church has a direct connection with her sobornicity, since Christ did not give his mandate to just one person who was devoted to him but to a group or a council of apostles. They received the same teaching and the same 'full and authentic image of his person and work', in such a way that they could transmit to the next generation of believers the same unitary image of Christ.[979]

Staniloae discusses three basic components of apostolicity. The first component consists in the fact that the apostles were the first to believe in Christ's divinity, 'a belief which was decisively strengthened in them by the fact that they had personally seen the risen Christ'. The second is that through the apostles we have received the true teaching of Christ, interpreted in the light of the resurrection. 'Before the resurrection the apostles could have not written the Gospels and their preaching could not have not had the scope of vision which harmonises the whole Scripture of the Old Testament in the plan of salvation in Christ, a vision whose written form we have especially in St Paul's Epistles'.[980] The third component of apostolicity consists in the fact that the apostles were the first to receive, without any human mediation, the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Thus they became those through whose mediation the gift of the Spirit was to be received by those who believed.

Staniloae conceives of a direct connection between the above mentioned fact and the concepts of apostolic succession and tradition. This leads him to state that 'the apostolicity of the Church unites history with the present'. Furthermore, 'apostolicity means the binding together of the generations in the whole of the tradition coming to us from the apostles, since it is the full revelation but also in the grace and the spirituality that comes to us in an uninterrupted manner from the Spirit of Christ through them [the apostles]'.[981]

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[979] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:292.

[980] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:295.

[981] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:299–300.

10.5 Conclusions

We have engaged in this study with the definite purpose of looking at Staniloae's ecclesiology through lens of our perichoretic model. In the present chapter we have dealt in detail with issues like the trinitarian basis of the Church in general and the balanced unity of the works of Christ and the Spirit in particular, the Church's theo-anthropic constitution and her rootedness in the five elements of Christ event, and finally, the four traditional marks of the Church.

We have shown that Staniloae's theology was contextually Romanian and dialogically ecumenical. Thus, his theology in general and his ecclesiology in particular was profoundly engaged with the complex issues facing the Romanian society during the diverse periods of his life. This was an expression of the special commitment of the theologian for his country and Romanianism. Yet, this dedication was often expressed in resolutely nationalistic terms, in line with his approving attitude towards the Iron Guard in its early non-violent period, as even one of his most sympathetic commentators is forced to admit.[982]

Furthermore, Staniloae was probably the Romanian theologian who interacted with more theologians from other traditions than any of his compatriots. Nevertheless, the way in which he achieved this was not without its problems. As Louth, an Anglican converted to Orthodoxy points out, Staniloae's attitude to non-Orthodox theology was 'quite negative, even uncomprehending'.[983] This was more than a personal characteristic of Staniloae's. The preferred method of doing theology in Orthodoxy, even to the present day, is the comparative one. Thus 'in order to show specificity, the patristic character of the teaching, in order to illustrate Orthodox views of the revealed truth, this theology is developed in confrontation with the Catholic and Protestant positions'. The risk of this approach is that through a concentration on the strengths of one's own tradition (often with a corresponding neglect of its respective weaknesses) and on its differences from (or even superiority to) other Christian traditions, rather than on what

[982] C. Nicolescu, *Teologul in cetate. Parintele Staniloae si aria politicii* (Bucuresti: Christiana, 2003); see particularly the chapter 'Biserica si partidele politice', 69–78.
[983] Louth, 'Review Essay', 260.

is held in common, could easily 'transform this comparison into a polemic'.[984] Such an exclusivist attitude can easily become a hindrance to ecumenism.[985]

We consider that Staniloae was generally right in his evaluation of the disbalance he observed in Protestant ecclesiologies (more inclined towards pneumatological emphases) and in Catholic ecclesiological constructions (majoring, at least traditionally, on Christological emphases). Thus, the author sought to achieve in his ecclesiology a balance between the roles of Christ and of the Holy Spirit, hence his emphasis on both the Cross and Pentecost. He worked with great care, stressing both the specific ministries of each of the two divine persons and the equal importance that has to be given to them. On the one hand, he tried to avoid an illegitimate emphasis on the role of the Spirit, which makes Christ secondary, and thus 'distant', leading to the subjectivism and the fragmentation that are prevalent in Protestant circles. Alternatively, he equally condemned an exaggerated emphasis on Christ at the expense of the Spirit, because this leads implicitly to the institutionalism specific to the Catholic Church.

We also appreciate the importance that Staniloae gave to the role of the Church in the overall plan of salvation, both for humanity and creation. By doing that, he avoided any individualistic understanding of soteriology. Thus, although salvation was for him also a personal matter, it could in no way be viewed as a private issue, but as one having profound social and cosmic implications.

As we have pointed out in the first part of this thesis, some authors believe that the Christological concept of *perichoresis* could be suitable to account for the dynamics of the work of Christ through the Spirit in the believer, particularly because the incarnated Christ unites hypostatically in his person the divine and human natures.[986] Nevertheless, our research has convinced us that the use of this meaning of the concept

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[984] I. Juhász, 'Dumitru Staniloae's Ecumenical Studies as an Aspect of the Orthodox–Protestant Dialogue', *JES*, 16, 1979, 758.

[985] Juhász detects two such tendencies in Staniloae's theology that can become problematic in ecumenism: (1) his desire to revive separatist traditions (Photian filioquism is one possible example); and (2) a tendency to exclusivism in ecclesiology – 'Staniloae's Ecumenical Studies', 751. See also O'Brien, *OPEFDS*, 36–37, who contrasts Staniloae's rigid approach with what he considers the more constructive approach of Zizioulas. Later however (p. 39), O'Brien admits that 'with the same clarity with which Father Staniloae presents the lines of disagreement, elsewhere in his writing he presents the working model of reconciliation'. As we have pointed out elsewhere, it is this kind of ambivalence that frequently puzzles Staniloae's commentators.

[986] Both Harrison ('*Perichoresis*', 63) and Twombly (*Perichoresis*, 153–180) have opted for this solution.

would be leading to distortions. This is why we prefer to view this dynamic through the lens of trinitarian *perichoresis*. As a result, we cannot talk about a perichoretic relationship between Christ, the Head, and the Body, made of human members, because humanity could be diminished if not obliterated in the process, which would lead to a purely Docetic ecclesiology. Instead, we favour a view of the Church in which the human members are called to relate perichoretically to each other, in Christ and through the Spirit – we called this 'the perichoretic model of the Church', a perspective that is proper to Staniloae, as confirmed by our quotation from his commentary on Athanasius.[987] At the same time, we need to keep in mind that this is true only analogically, since a direct transfer from the level of the divine to the human level is not legitimate.

At this point in our analysis, besides occasional polemics with Lossky and Karmiris, we did not observe major differences between Staniloae's ecclesiology and the classic Orthodox ecclesiologies developed by Evdokimov,[988] Meyendorff[989] or even Bulgakov.[990] We will observe however in the next chapters that he differed from some of these theologians on particular points in his development of the doctrine of the Church.

We have observed, for instance, in the present chapter that Staniloae did not follow Zizioulas in his analysis of the specific roles of Christ (as the One who 'institutes' the Church) and of the Spirit (as the divine person who 'constitutes' the Body).[991] In fact, because his chief concern was to give equal attention to both Christ and the Spirit, as we have already shown, his tendency was to somewhat 'level' their specificity. From this point of view, we consider Zizioulas's position a much more nuanced and carefully worked proposal.

The balance we have mentioned above can also be observed in Staniloae's rejection of the natural-supernatural dichotomy in relation to revelation, salvation and

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[987] Sf. Atanasie cel Mare, *Scrieri II*, D. Staniloae (tr.) (Bucuresti: EIBMBOR, 1988) 85, n. 159a.

[988] P. Evdokimov, *L'Ortodoxie* (Neuchâtel: Delachaux and Niestlé, 1959).

[989] J. Meyendorff, *L'Eglise orthodoxe. Hier et aujourd'hui* (Paris: Seuil: 1995) and *The Byzantine Legacy in the Orthodox Church* (Crestwood, NY: SVSP, 2001).

[990] S. Bulgakov, *The Orthodox Church* (Crestwood, NY: SVSP, 1988).

[991] J. Zizioulas, *Being as Communion. Studies in Personhood and the Church* (Crestwood: SVSP, 1993) 140.

the Church. In this sense, he did not see the Church as separated from the rest of creation but as the means through which it will be finally deified, pneumatised and made 'transparent' for Christ through the Holy Spirit.

This holistic approach to ecclesiology and theology in general, specific to Staniloae, is also reflected in his insistence on rooting the Church not only in the cross but rather in all five essential components of the Christ event, from the incarnation to the Pentecost. By doing so he wanted to avoid at all costs the forensic soteriology of the western church. We consider this to be a legitimate concern. Nevertheless, we contend that Orthodox theology in general and Staniloae in particular, tends to shift the balance in the opposite direction, by not giving proper attention to the juridical implications of sin and salvation.[992]

We have shown that for Staniloae incarnation is the most'weighty' of the five foundational asts of the Christ event. This is obviously not without consequences. According to Bartos, 'Staniloae's apparently "incarnational" view of redemption gives priority to the restitution of man's corrupted nature, rather than to the forgiveness of his guilt', which has as a result a diminishing of 'the biblical ideas of substitution and satisfaction'.[993] In spite of its clear bias, this may be a valid criticism, as long as it is simply taken as pointing to an imbalance and its purpose is seen in terms of a search for the integration of the two perspectives, rather than an implicit statement about the superiority of the western perspective.

In light of the above analysis, we cannot agree with Roberson, who argues that 'Staniloae views the Church as an extension of the incarnation'.[994] If this were true, it would mean that we could trace at least some similarities between Staniloae and the institutional and authoritarian ecclesiology of the First Vatican Council.[995] We believe

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[992] For a critique of this tendency in Eastern Orthodoxy, see M. Horton, 'Are Eastern Orthodoxy and Evangelicalism Compatible? No. An Evangelical Perspective', in J. J. Stamoulis (ed.), *Three Views*, 117–143, together with the responses of the other contributors to this book (pp. 145–157) and Horton's final conclusions (pp.158–166).

[993] Bartos, *DEOT*, 332. This is a typically western and particularly Protestant critique of the Orthodox view of soteriology, which is more ontological and less forensic.

[994] Roberson, *CROE*, 48.

[995] The risk with such a position is that 'it makes the church and its structures absolute, divine in its origin – Kärkkäinen, *Ecclesiology*, 26–28. As an alternative to this position, the Catholic theologian Müllen suggested a view of the church as a continuation of Jesus' anointing with the Holy Spirit in his baptism – H. Müllen, *Una Mystica persona. Die Kirche als das Mysterium der Heilsgeschichtlichen*

that even Roberson would disagree with this. In fact, it is possible that Roberson misunderstood the passage to which he points in this statement. There is no mention of the incarnation in the text he discusses.

Thus Staniloae writes: 'the mystery of the Church, in its proper sense, as the third mystery, presupposes [the existence] of the first one, i.e. the mystery established through creation. Yet she could not be brought to life except through the Mystery of Christ [the second mystery]. She is nothing but the extension of the Mystery of Christ: she is filled completely with the Mystery of Christ'.[996] The context of this discussion is an introduction to the holy mysteries. All that Staniloae is trying to establish through the statement above is that Christ and the Church (but also creation) are inseparable in terms of his understanding of sacramental theology.

Staniloae's approach to ecclesiology was rather polemical, chiefly in relation to Catholicism and Protestantism. Roberson summarises the position of the Romanian Orthodox theologian: 'While the Catholic Church over-emphasised the Church at the expense of the individual, Protestants over-emphasised the individual at the expense of the Church'.[997] Some commentators believe that this polemical anti-Catholic stance stems from the general hostility of the Romanian government towards the Catholic Church after the coming to power of the communist regime.[998] This clarification is plausible, although it represents quite a weak excuse for the exaggeratedly critical attitude that Staniloae manifests towards the Catholics. This explanation is weakened even more by the observation that the Staniloae had already used the same approach before the communist regime was in place.[999]

A more likely explanation, in our opinion, is that Staniloae never forgave the Catholics for what he perceived to be a forceful breaking up of the body of Romanian

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Identität des heiligen Heistes in Christus und die Kirche. Eine Person in Vielen Personen (Munich: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1968[3]).

[996] Staniloae, *TDO*, 3:13.

[997] Roberson, 'Ecumenism', 45.

[998] F. Popan, 'Le caractère occidental de la théologie Roumaine d'aujourd'hui', *Ostkirchliche Studien*, 8, 1959, 169–183. Roberson explains that Staniloae 'was not able to make a profound study of Catholic and reformation theology, and consequently often rejects western positions on the basis of superficial impressions'. Furthermore, he has 'the tendency to take aspects of the western tradition out of context and to interpret them in the incompatible environment of Byzantine theology'. As a result of this, 'many of his criticisms are simply without foundation' – 'Ecumenism', 51 and 52, n. 7.

[999] J. Goia, 'Vues orthodoxes Roumaines sur le schisme et l'unité chrétienne', *Istina*, 2, 1955, 31–50.

Orthodoxy by the formation of the Uniate (Greek-Catholic) Church in Transylvania in 1698.[1000] Furthermore, by stating that 'the act through which the Uniate group in Transylvania returned to the Orthodox Church was realised spontaneously and without difficulties',[1001] he attempts 'to justify and defend the 1948 decision of the communist government that led to the brutal suppression and liquidation of the Greek Catholic Church in Transylvania and its absorption into the Romanian Orthodox Church'.[1002]

This polemic became unjust and almost ruthless when he dealt with the theological positions of the Evangelicals, which he often caricatured and misrepresented.[1003] At the same time, Volf's attempt at producing a trinitarian ecclesiology emphasising community proves that Staniloae was wrong in his belief that Evangelicalism can only produce individualistic ecclesiologies.[1004]

Yet we have to admit that, particularly in his later writings, after he was able to engage in ecumenical dialogues, Staniloae manifested an openness 'that is unusual for an Orthodox theologian'.[1005]

[1000] D. Staniloae, 'Problema uniatismului in perspective ecumenica', *Ortodoxia*, 30, 4, 1969, 616–625 – in this paper, the author calls Uniatism a 'mistake' that has to be admitted, much like the one made by Cardinal Humbert when he anathemised the Byzantine Church in 1054 (p. 616). See also D. Staniloae, *Uniatismul in Transilvania, incercare de dezmembrare a poporului roman* (Bucuresti: EIBMBOR, 1973). O'Brien confirms our conclusion when he suggests that Staniloae's emotions in the 'question of the Orthodox identity of the Transylvanian people [closely related to the question of Uniatism] remained deeply rooted in his theological and political outlook' – *OPEFDS*, 7.

[1001] Staniloae 'Problema uniatismului', 619. The author does not appear to be troubled by the fact that thousands of Greek Catholics paid the supreme price of martyrdom in communist prisons for their commitment to the Catholic faith. Nevertheless, Staniloae may have been compelled to adopt this position by pressure from the authorities, as he suggests in a text written after the fall of communism – D. Staniloae, 'Prigonirea Bisericii Ortodoxe stramosesti sub comunism', *Telegraful roman*, 138, 7–8, 1990, 1–2.

[1002] Roberson 'Ecumenism', 47.

[1003] To give just a small example, in his last prepared public address, read in Sibiu after his death, Staniloae alluded to a meeting he had in his home with the Romanian Baptist theologian E. Bartos. He explains that during this meeting, Bartos (whose name is not mentioned in the text), 'admitted that in the writings of the Fathers and in mine [Staniloae's] we go beyond the general moral talk about Christ among the sects (*sic*!) and this can be good teaching for them also – Staniloae, 'Iubitii mei frati sibieni', 638. Besides the derogatory description of the Baptists as a 'sect' (the Romanian word could very well be translated also as 'cult') Bartos would have never accepted Staniloae's opinion that all presentation of Christ among Evangelicals is mere 'general moral talk'.

[1004] For an exploration of various understandings of ecclesiology in Evangelicalism, see J. G. Stackhouse, jr. (ed.), *Evangelical Ecclesiology. Reality or Illusion?* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2003).

[1005] The commentator observes that his involvement in the Catholic–Orthodox dialogue in 1982 at Munich caused Staniloae to 'moderate greatly his views on the Catholic Church' – Roberson, 'Ecumenism', 48, 51.

Staniloae's quite exclusivist position according to which Orthodoxy is the only true Church presents a particular difficulty in ecumenism. However, it did not stop most Orthodox Churches or Staniloae himself from engaging in vigorous ecumenical dialogue. This is probably a rare case when someone's ambivalence about a certain matter is a positive trait.

The ecclesiology of Staniloae was in no way a dry scholastic exercise. He combined a remarkable speculative ability with the genuine preoccupation for the practical implications of his theological construction. The theological, the mystical and the ethical dimensions are all intertwined in the way he formulated his understanding of the Church.

On the other side, we could hardly say that Staniloae's ecclesiology had a visible missionary dynamic. This reflects the somewhat static and introverted state of Orthodox missiology, particularly in countries where Orthodoxy is the majority faith. This has been explained, with a certain degree of legitimacy through the pressures of Turkish rule and then of the communist regimes on the various Orthodox Churches.[1006] Although somewhat legitimate, this sounds more like an excuse that a satisfying explanation. This is indicated by the fact that over fifteen years after the fall of communism, Orthodoxy in Eastern Europe has not recovered yet her missionary zeal, although the needs are great.

Unlike some Protestant ecclesiologies,[1007] which tend to define the Church in a functional manner and run the risk of making the definition too instrumental and sociological, even pragmatic, Staniloae prefers to build an understanding of the Church that views her as being rooted in the Trinity. This gives his ecclesiology a truly theological character.

The author reflects profoundly on the trinitarian dimension of the Church. He views the Church as an earthly reflection of the relationships between the divine persons in the Holy Trinity. This gives the Church a symbolic or, in Pelikan's terms, an 'iconic'

[1006] For an analysis of the present state of Orthodox missiology see J. Stamoulis, *Eastern Orthodox Mission Theology Today* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis, 1986). Paradoxically and relevantly, this book written by a Protestant author was the standard treatment of the theme under discussion, until the Romanian Orthodox ecumenist I. Bria published his book *The Liturgy after the Liturgy: Mission and Witness from an Orthodox Perspective* (Geneva: WCC, 1996).

[1007] See for instance M. Erickson, *Christian Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1995) 1028–1030.

nature[1008]. Thus she contains, although not entirely, the reality she is pointing to, being, at the same time, the only way towards it.

What, then, are the implications of this understanding? First, Staniloae presents, if we may say so, the 'here and yet still there' character of the divine presence in the Church. Secondly, the perichoretic relationships between the members of the Christian community have to reflect the dynamic that exists between the persons of the Trinity, characterised by 'unity in diversity', or, in other words, by *agape* love. Thirdly, being also an earthly human reality, the Church also takes on a sociological dimension, although she cannot be reduced to it. When viewed in light of our perichoretic model, the above considerations prove once more the consistency of Staniloae's trinitarian construction of ecclesiology.

The theological nature of the being of the Church is obvious yet again in Staniloae's discussion of the marks of the Church. He set the whole discussion in the context of the theandric constitution of the Church, involving the corollary of the synergistic principle. His approach was also consistently trinitarian. We need to add to this, again, the holistic vision that Staniloae is constantly bringing before our eyes when he speaks about salvation, not as an event but as a process; not as something having to do just with the spirit but with the body also; and finally, not as something affecting humanity only but also the whole of creation.

The charge that Staniloae constantly makes concerning the Catholic concept of 'created grace' is rejected by Roman Catholic commentators of his theological work. Roberson, for instance, believes that for a correct interpretation of the concept we need to meet the minimal condition of understanding the real intention of this teaching. He explains that

> the fundamental insight behind this doctrine is biblical to the core: the conviction that God is not a structure of human existence. Consequently, God must create a new state, or existential disposition in the human being which enables him or her to communicate immediately and directly with God. This is what is meant by 'created grace'.[1009]

[1008] J. Pelikan, *Vindication of Tradition*, 55–57.

[1009] Roberson, *CROE*, 163.

Turning to address the issues involved in the Orthodox concept of 'uncreated grace' Roberson explains that in fact, when things are correctly understood, there is much more agreement between the Orthodox and the Catholic positions than the terminology would make us think.

> Nevertheless, it is a firm tenet of Catholic theology, and this applies also to the theology of St. Augustine, that God's self-communication is not filtered through any human medium. Human means of communication can only be the medium in which the *human* response is made possible. In Catholic theology, grace is ultimately God's self-communication, in which the believer is directly and immediately placed in personal communion with the triune God.[1010]

To the above considerations, we may add that it is hard to observe in practical Catholic spirituality any of the concrete distancing effect between the believer and Christ that Staniloae considers to be the consequence of this doctrine. On the other hand, a similar allegation of a distancing effect between humanity and the divine persons is made by some theologians of different persuasions against the Orthodox concept of 'divine uncreated energies' (or grace) specific to neo-Palamite thinking.[1011] Again, it seems to us that the discussion is more one about the correct terminology and understanding, rather than a description of what really happens in the divine-human encounter.

The same is true about Staniloae's accusation that this kind of distancing has had as an effect a weakening of holiness in Catholicism and Protestantism. It seems to us that such a charge may be issued exclusively from the position of an ivory tower type of analysis and does not have anything to do with the everyday reality of the Christian communities, whether Protestant, Catholic, but also Orthodox, in the opposite direction.

The distinction that Staniloae makes between dogma, *theologoumena* and opinion is very useful from an ecumenical point of view. His inflexibility on matters of dogma is able to provide ecumenism with the stability of conviction that offers protection from the kind of compromise that seeks unity by sacrificing truth or building it on the lowest common denominator. It is precisely the relativistic understanding of

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[1010] Roberson, *CROE*, 163.

[1011] See especially ch. 6 'The Teaching of Gregory Palamas on God' in C. M. LaCugna, *God for Us. The Trinity and Christian Life* (San Francisco: Harper, 1992) 181–205.

unity that Staniloae criticises here which brought the World Council of Churches into the impasse that it experiences today. On the other side, however, the necessary condition for an unhindered dialogue is for the different parties to work with the same (or at least similar) definitions for each category of truth involved, which unfortunately is not yet the case.

At the same time, by allowing for diversity in *theologoumena* and private opinions, the Orthodox seem to allow space for exploring and sharing an important potential of wealth within the ecumenical dialogue. Yet, the claim that the Orthodox Church is the only authentic Church may have an opposite effect. To the hypothetical possibility that no Church is the owner of the whole truth, Staniloae responds with a series of rhetorical questions: 'Then we may ask: which is the true faith? Isn't there any Church that knows it? And these interpretations are all of equal value? Does this not lead us to a dead-end relativism?'[1012] We believe it does not. In our opinion, the fact that no church is the exclusive owner of true faith does not invalidate in any way the idea that true faith does indeed exist. We would rather suggest that, like absolute truth, true faith is something we all aspire to, but never reach entirely on this side of eternity. This is why we have to part ways with the author at this point.

The Church is, in Staniloae's understanding, a visible institution that points towards the invisible triune God that she reflects. This is precisely the concern of the next chapter.

However, before going any further, the evidence we have examined thus far make us conclude that, seen through the lens of the perichoretic model of the Church that we have formulated in the first section of our thesis, the doctrine of the Church constructed by Staniloae appears to be, at least up to this point in our study and in spite of some accidental inconsistencies, thoroughly trinitarian.

[1012] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:265, n. 94.

11 Ecclesial Structure and Ministry in the Theology of Staniloae

After having analysed Staniloae's view of the ontology of the Church, we concentrate in the present chapter of our study on the structural dimension of the ecclesial community as presented in the author's trinitarian ecclesiology. But since structure is not an aim in itself, but the means for accomplishing the task of service in the Body of Christ, we will begin by giving attention to the topic of ecclesial ministry.

Staniloae presents ministry in the Church primarily as an extension of Christ's offices as prophet, high priest and king,[1013] resulting in the ecclesial functions of teaching, eucharistic sacrifice and leadership.[1014]

Staniloae's basic statement in his introduction to this theme is that, in ministering through the Church, Christ does not treat her as a passive object but as 'a free partner, called to freedom and to a loving relationship with him'.[1015] On the other hand, Christ cannot be perceived as being passive in this process either, given that teaching, eucharistic sacrifice and leadership in the Church cannot be separated from his person.[1016]

Thus, 'Christ continues to teach his Church [as prophet],[1017] illuminating her to understand his words and his saving work in the context of each period of time'.[1018] From this emerges the teaching responsibility of the Church, where each member has a particular role to play. The specific role played by each Christian should, according to

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[1013] *TDO*, 2:229–235.

[1014] As Louth rightly points out, Staniloae declares that this theme is patristic, whilst giving no references. However, argues Louth, 'it was only with Calvin's *Institutes* that the notion of Christ's threefold office assumed the structural significance with which he invests it'. – *Review Essay*, 259.

[1015] *TDO*, 2:230.

[1016] The author believes that this separation is taking place, at least 'to a certain extent', in Catholicism, where the Pope acts as *vicarius filii dei* (thus Christ being removed a step away from actual involvement in the life of the Church). Similarly, the same distancing is said to take place in Protestantism, where, the author claims, Christian ministry is exercised in an individualistic manner – *TDO*, 2:231.

[1017] We observe that Staniloae, in line with most patristic authors and at least in the present context, seems to reduce Christ's prophetic ministry to his teaching office.

[1018] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:231.

Staniloae, be in direct proportion to the extent to which they have been taught by Christ, whether it is the teaching given by apostles and missionaries, or simply the teaching that parents give to their children in the home.

Christ as high priest continually offers to the Father both himself and us as a living sacrifice. However, for Staniloae, this does not involve passivity on our part: Christ's sacrifice attracts us to an active self-sacrifice as subjects. 'Our self-sacrifice is thus full of the self-sacrifice of Christ'.[1019]

Christ is king, but He shares with us his kingship, which involves both the ability to guide one another and the power to overcome 'the inferior and demonic tendencies', freeing us from the bonds of nature, sin and death.[1020]

Beginning from this structural model, Staniloae builds an overall understanding of ministry that Miller describes as the 'three-fold priesthood'.[1021]

11.1 The 'Three-fold Priesthood'

11.1.1 Natural Priesthood

The presentation of Staniloae's doctrine of creation begins non-traditionally, but probably intentionally, with the human person. Thus, Staniloae develops his doctrine of creation starting with the central place that the human person has in it, at the same time giving, as Louth says, 'cosmic significance' to the personal.[1022]

As the Bible clearly states (Gen. 1:28), humanity was created in order to have authority over the natural order. And even if, as a result of the Fall, man has to a large extent lost the ability to perform his priestly duties in a satisfactory manner, through Christ he is called to have his capacity re-established, in the new age of grace that He introduced through the Incarnation.

In formulating his conception of 'natural priesthood'[1023], Staniloae underlines the unbreakable continuum that exists between humanity and nature. Thus, humanity,

[1019] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:232–234.
[1020] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:232.
[1021] Miller, *Gift*, 96.
[1022] Louth, *Review Essay*, 259.
[1023] See, Miller, *Gift*, 60–62.

through grace, because of its 'ontological unity with nature'[1024], is called to become an agent of deification for the whole created order. Subsequently, 'natural priesthood' becomes the background for the priesthood of all believers.

11.1.2 General Priesthood

We have been surprised to observe that Staniloae devotes only two paragraphs to this topic in his *Dogmatics*. After the theoretical affirmation of the fact that general priesthood, as well as general responsibility for teaching and guidance, is rooted in Christ's triple office of king, prophet and high priest, Staniloae insists that the power for it comes from 'the continuous bringing of the sacrifice of Christ and sharing into it' in the eucharist and 'especially' from the prayers of the one who brings the sacrifice, i.e. the priest.[1025] We would rather agree with Karmiris, who argues that 'the general priesthood of the laity, being the beginning and the basis for the special priesthood of the clergy, comes first'.[1026]

Although Staniloae's statement is true in itself, the emphasis that he places on it undermines almost completely his mere affirmation of 'general priesthood', which is left not only unexplained, but also void of any concrete content.

What Miller has written could be quoted in support of this conclusion: 'Within such a scheme, we would expect Staniloae to attribute to believers as a whole a renewed priestly role. In fact, Staniloae sees the sacramental life and the eucharist above all as the expression of humanity's renewed capacity to act as priests of creation', in other words, he gives a very limited role to the laity in the life of the church.[1027] This deficient position ignores the fact that 'laicity' is 'a fundamental dimension of the entire Church',[1028] the *laos* of God.[1029]

We have to agree again with Karmiris, *contra* Staniloae, when he writes: 'when the clergy speak and teach, the laity listen and are taught and when the laity speak,

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[1024] Staniloae, *TDO*, 1:323.

[1025] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:235–236.

[1026] J. N. Karmiris, *The Status and Ministry of the Laity in the Orthodox Church* (Brookline, Mass.: Holy Cross, 1994), 8.

[1027] Miller, *Gift*, 96–97.

[1028] Forte, *Icon*, 35.

[1029] See Anthony, Metropolitan of Sourozh, 'The Laos of God', in A. Walker and C. Caras (eds.), *Living Orthodoxy in the Modern World* (London: SPCK, 1996) 236 237.

reading the epistle readings, the Creed, the Lord's Prayer, or preach the holy word, [!] etc., the clergy listen and are taught, so that all listen and speak and all teach and listen'.[1030]

Zizioulas also differs from Staniloae on this point. For him, since baptism and chrismation involve the laying on of hands, 'there is no such thing as "non-ordained" persons in the Church'. Thus, through baptism, every member of the Church 'becomes a member of a particular "*ordo*" in the eucharistic community'.[1031] The implications of this position for the dignity of the layperson in the Church are immense, at least theoretically, when it is compared with Staniloae's approach.

In contrast with his sketchy treatment of the priesthood of all believers, Staniloae expends a great deal of effort on developing his theology of ministerial priesthood. For this reason, we shall also spend more time on this topic.

11.1.3 Ministerial Priesthood

Staniloae identifies the need for the ministerial priesthood as being rooted in the principle of representation. According to this principle, the priest is seen as a type of Christ, who brings sacrifice 'for all'. Consequently, one of the primary purposes of the ordained priesthood is to be a symbol of Christ before the congregation.[1032] At the same time, the priest and the bishop represent the Church before God and before the world.[1033]. However, insists Staniloae, in so doing they should not be seen as a substitute for the congregation, as he argues is happening in Catholicism. Why? Because the ordained minister is like a head for the body, each being indispensable to the existence of the other.[1034]

Furthermore, following Gregory of Nazianzus, Staniloae presents the role of the minister as that of one who co-ministers with Christ.[1035] He conceives of him only as a

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[1030] Karmiris, *Laity*, 22–23. The idea of a lay person preaching during the Orthodox liturgy would sound quite surprising to anybody living in a majority Orthodox context.

[1031] Zizioulas, *Being*, 215–216. Karmiris, *Laity*, 5, expresses a similar position.

[1032] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:236.

[1033] This is the reason why, believes Roberson, Staniloae supports 'the practice in many Orthodox churches of lay participation in the election of priests and bishops' – Roberson, *CROE*, 68.

[1034] Staniloae, 'Din aspectul sacramental al Bisericii', *Studii teologice*, 18, 9–10, 1966, 554. We consider this criticism as being legitimate, but more so in light of pre-Vatican II Catholicism.

[1035] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:243.

'visible point of convergence' in the contact of the believers with the unseen Christ. Such a point of convergence is needed, argues Staniloae, because the believers are not only spiritual beings but they also have material bodies.[1036]

From an Orthodox perspective, priesthood, given its representational character, cannot be the result of personal initiative or of the community's initiative, because '[the community] is made of members who are not priests'. Consequently, as Staniloae points out earlier in his work when referring to Christ as head of the Church, 'the members from which it is constituted, being equal, do not easily accept unity under a head from among them. Thus, when the community accepts the priest ordained by the bishop, it acknowledges that there is an ontological difference between Christ as Head of the Church and his mystical Body. The need of the community for a visible priest is the sign of the Church's need for Christ as high priest.[1037] Without this, Staniloae believes, ecclesiology tends to become docetic.[1038]

At the same time, Staniloae insists that 'the Church is not only visible'. The visible and the invisible aspects are interpenetrated and indispensable and have their roots in the interpenetrated and indispensable work of Christ and the Holy Spirit. For this reason, concludes Staniloae, we cannot set the institutional and the charismatic aspects of the Church in opposition to each other.[1039]

In his *Dogmatics,* Staniloae does not consider at length the issue of apostolic succession in the ordination of bishops and priests. However, in briefly discussing it, he insists that it should not be understood as having just a 'past' or a 'horizontal' dimension, although this is important and must not be excluded. 'Grace comes every time from above, too.' In fact Christ is the One who, through the Holy Spirit, ordains 'invisibly and directly, but visibly through the bishops'.[1040] This insight can offer at least a certain degree of room for ecumenical dialogue with the Protestants.

[1036] D. Staniloae, 'Biserica în sensul de lacas de larga comuniune în Hristos', *Ortodoxia*, 34, 3, 1982, 340. Staniloae's statement is obviously right, but the implication he draws from it seems unconvincing to us. It does not appear to be much connection between the premise and the conclusion.

[1037] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:236–237.

[1038] This, stresses Staniloae, has resulted in Protestantism in a weakening of the visible aspect of the Church, in favour of her invisible aspect.

[1039] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:236–238.

[1040] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:239.

When discussing the efficacy of the mysteries, Staniloae declares that although 'it is desirable for the priests and bishops to have an exemplary spiritual life', the validity of the ministry and especially of the Holy Mysteries is not dependent on the worthiness of the minister.[1041] At the same time, 'the priest must not exercise in an arbitrary way the power manifested through him, even if he is unworthy'.[1042] Here Staniloae is once again using his perichoretic approach, but we believe that he has not worked out all its implications. The way he describes the situation leaves the impression that the two principles, the life of the minister and the sacraments he administers to the people, work almost independently of each other.

Following John Chrysostom and Gregory of Nazianzus, Staniloae underlines the importance of the teaching responsibility of the priest, together with the hard work in study and mortification of the flesh that this involves. However, he fails to reflect on the virtual absence of the sermon in most Orthodox Church services in Romania before the fall of communism.[1043] At least part of the reason for this weakness of the Romanian Church may be the Communist authorities' impatience with any type of teaching undertaken outside their control.

The teaching function contributes in an essential manner to the fulfillment of one of the most important roles of ministerial priesthood, that of maintaining the unity of the Church.[1044] The fact that the bishop ordains the priests and deacons and that every bishop is ordained by a college of bishops works towards making provision not only for an institutional unity, but also for a unity of faith.

As Roberson rightly points out[1045], Staniloae, reflecting once again on the model of the Trinity, considers that the principle of communion is central to the function of the ordained ministry in keeping the unity of the church. Although the priest acts alone in his parish, he is in communion with the other priests in the diocese. Without this he

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[1041] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:242.

[1042] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:245.

[1043] At least this was the general pattern before the fall of communism. The situation changed radically in many places after the fall of communism.

[1044] He makes here a distinction between the 'liturgical community', led by the priest (corresponding to what the Evangelicals call a 'local church'), and the 'local Church', led by the bishop (*Ibid*., 2:241). Staniloae does not insist in his theology on the distinction between the local and the universal church to the extent that Zizioulas does in his theology – *Being as Communion*, ch. 5, 247–260.

[1045] Roberson, *CROE*, 64.

cannot really be a priest in the Church of Christ. Even if the bishop is alone when he ordains a priest, he works in communion with the other bishops. The bishop in particular has to be in communion with the local community of believers and with the college of bishops, as successors of the college of apostles Christ left behind.[1046]

This discussion of the principle of unity in the Church brought about through the ministry of the clergy leads us now to a consideration of the related topics of synodality and sobornicity and the way they influence Staniloae's vision of ecumenism.

11.2 Synodality and Sobornicity – Staniloae's Ecumenical Vision

Central to Staniloae's understanding of ecumenism are the twin concepts of 'synodality' (or 'synodicity', as he sometimes calls it, meaning simply 'conciliarity') and 'sobornicity' (his preferred alternative for 'catholicity'). When trying to illustrate synodality Staniloae uses the image of the 'bowing down of each in front of the others'. The reciprocal submission, to which this metaphor alludes, results in the communion between the believers in a congregation and in the synodality of the bishops.[1047] This means that in the college of bishops there is ontological equality, although obviously the bishops keep their economic (functional) differences which are important to the strength of the synod. For pragmatic reasons the bishops may elect from among themselves a *primus inter pares* (normally the bishop of the capital city) but he will have only a temporary position and may exchange roles at any time with any of the other bishops.

This Orthodox model is presented as being in sharp contrast with the hierarchical Catholic model. Staniloae considers the latter as being governed by the *ad principatum* principle, while the former is inspired by the *ad servitutem* principle. He does however concede that 'progressive' Catholic theologians such as Hans Küng have tried in recent years to reinterpret papal primacy in terms of service. Yet, their attempts do not convince him; he believes that Christ's command in Matthew 20:26 is addressed to all and is not the privilege of just one person.[1048]

[1046] D. Staniloae, 'Temeiurile teologice ale ierarhiei si ale sinodalitatii ei', *Studii teologice*, 22, 1970, 169–170.

[1047] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:249.

[1048] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:249.

Staniloae relates synodality to the concept of the infallibility of the Church as the body of Christ, 'because Christ is infallible'. As a result, the episcopate takes infallible decisions 'in the name of the Church and in inner connection to her and by taking into consideration the mind of the Church in relation to her life in Christ'.[1049]

Staniloae points to a number of implications concerning the principle of synodality. First, the infallibility of the college and not of a person was a protection against dictatorship in the Church. Second, it protected the Church 'from any form of change in matters of faith, which the decisions made by one person alone have brought in Catholicism, as well as from the chaos of individualistic opinions, as is the case in Protestantism'. Third, the decisions of the ecumenical councils were not the result of a 'rational individual speculation disconnected from the life of the Church', as he believes is the case in western Christianity, but reflected 'the faith and the sacramental life of the Church inherited through tradition'. This is the reason why the dogmatic formulations of the councils were able to be immediately incorporated in the hymns and prayers of the Church.[1050]

A further implication of the synergy between the episcopate and the Church at large is in the area of the dynamics of the synodal ecclesiological model. Not only did the bishop represent the dogmatic, sacramental and prayer life of his local church in the council, but he was also bound to bring the decisions of the ecumenical council back to his church. Only those decisions which had been accepted and incorporated in the liturgical life of the wider Church were considered infallible and confirmed as coming from the Holy Spirit.[1051]

Staniloae understands synodality as being both rooted in and conditioned by the sobornicity of the Church[1052], as a reflection of the intratrinitarian dynamics, and by a

[1049] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:249–250.

[1050] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:250.

[1051] D. Staniloae, 'Autoritatea Bisericii', *Studii teologice*, 16, 1964, 209.

[1052] A term coined by the Russian theologian Khomiakov, that Staniloae prefers to the term 'catholicity' in order to avoid misunderstandings. He uses it not in a geographical or quantitative but in a qualitative sense. Defined in this way, the Church is like a living organism, where Christ, as the head, gives unity. At the same time, each member, through the Holy Spirit, is affirmed in his own identity and specific giftedness, for the sake of service towards the unity of the body, in the bond of love.

'natural sobornicity' of humanity created in the image of the triune God.[1053] This potentially fruitful ecumenical standpoint represents 'a proper tool to foster an authentic ecumenical dialogue without running the risk of doctrinal relativism'.[1054]

The analysis of the role of the clergy, including the hierarchy, in the life of the Church is naturally concluded in Staniloae's *Dogmatics* by a discussion on the visible structure of the Church. The nature of this discussion is twofold. It first contrasts the Christological with the pneumatological dimension of the Church and then concentrates on the human dimension of the theandric constitution of the Church.

11.3 Priesthood and the Visible Character of the Church

The visible aspect of the Church is worked out by Staniloae in obvious opposition to the Protestant understanding of ecclesiology, which, he believes, overemphasises the pneumatological and the divine, i.e. the invisible character of the Church at the expense of the Christological and the human, i.e. the visible character of the Church. Such an approach leads, according to him, to a 'deceptive subjectivity' and, in the final analysis, to the fragmentation of the Church.

Staniloae also believes that 'without the priest there is no Church'[1055], since the priest is a symbol of Christ, without whom the Church cannot be conceived of. 'Priesthood is thus a confirmation of the real incarnation of the Word of God as our objective Mediator before God.'[1056] From these basic assertions, he deduces that a denial of priesthood has a number of crucial consequences.

Firstly, by a syllogistic deduction, Staniloae concludes that a denial of priesthood implies doubt in the importance of the Lord's incarnation. He affirms, quite speculatively we believe, that this is the reason why some Protestant schools of thought have denied the incarnation. Secondly and closely related to the above, a denial of ordained priesthood would involve doubting that salvation has to do also with our bodies. He asserts that 'the works proceeding from his body cannot be exercised on our

[1053] The author develops this concept in his article 'Natura sinodicitatii', *Studii teologice*, 29, 1977, 605–615.
[1054] L. Turcescu, 'Eucharistic Ecclesiology or Open Sobornicity', in Turcescu, *DSTMT*, 102.
[1055] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:254.
[1056] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:251.

bodies but through tangible deeds done by visible persons, i.e. the priests, as images of Christ the Mediator'. Thirdly, as a natural consequence of the first two, a denial of clergy means a denial of the Church as an objective environment of salvation. This is why, in Staniloae's opinion, we witness a weakening of the visible Church in favour of an unseen Church in some [Protestant] denominations.[1057]

11.4 Conclusions

As we are drawing near the end of our study, and as we explore the practical implications of Staniloae's view of the Church, we observe that the perichoretic perspective that we are using enables us not only to point out to the consistent trinitarian basis of his ecclesiology, to it also allows us to observe some of his trinitarian inconsistencies.

The little attention given by Staniloae to the priesthood of all believers is symptomatic, we believe, for the reduced attention generally given to this topic in Orthodox ecclesiology. Our criticism of the Orthodox position on general priesthood may appear exaggerated. Yet, the following example will prove exactly the contrary. In 1971, the Preparatory Committee for the Pan-Orthodox Synod was asked to prepare a study on the theology of the laity. The committee did not present the study, as requested, giving as its reason the view that 'the subject does not particularly concern the Orthodox Church; it is not a burning question and it does not constitute a problem for it'.[1058]

One of the reasons for this overlooking of the role of laity in the Orthodox Church may very well be a conviction that Protestantism has given the laity excessive rights and privileges which do not properly belong to them'.[1059] Yet Karmiris has to admit that unfortunately 'during the course of the centuries, some deviations have taken place which need to be rectified. Thus the practice of underestimating the laity, which

[1057] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:251–252.

[1058] Karmiris, *Laity*, 39– 40, n. 5, 6. The author presents in this book a short bibliography of Orthodox works on this theme, none of them yet available in western languages.

[1059] Karmiris, *Laity*, 1.

began in Byzantium and was passed on to us and is still in effect, needs to be adjusted and made to harmonise with contemporary conditions and ideas'.[1060]

In the light of our perichoretic model of the Church, we may conclude that this clericalist position is not compatible with the trinitarian perspective on which Staniloae seeks to build his ecclesiology. No real *perichoresis* between the members of the *laos* of God is possible when in the church a small number of professional ministers are performing the liturgy, while the vast majority of believers are just passive onlookers. From this reality to the consumerist stance of the present day Evangelical megachurches there is only one small step. Yet, the existence of such radical voices within Orthodoxy, like that of Karmiris, gives us hope for a renewal of the role of lay people in the Orthodox Churches in the future.

This does not mean that we agree completely with Karmiris, especially when he argues at one point that 'the position of the laity within the church must always be considered inferior to that of the clergy'.[1061] This ontological inequality appears to be again incompatible with a trinitarian view of ecclesiology, when viewed perichoretically.

When he affirms that, given its representational character, sacramental priesthood cannot be the result of personal initiative or of the community's initiative, Staniloae's argument (that the lay members of the church, being equal, could not easily accept unity under a head from among them) is not only weak and unconvincing, but it also comes against some clear biblical examples. In these, some ordained church leaders, were not only chosen 'from among them', under the guidance of the Spirit, but they were also voted on by women and men as lay members of the congregation. Moreover, in some cases in the early history of the Church, even some popes were appointed by popular acclamation.

[1060] Karmiris, *Laity*, 3. Living in a majority Orthodox environment, we cannot but salute this analysis and the willingness for change that it displays. Yet we need to point out that the author tends both to subtly blame the present unhappy situation and to justify the need for change by an appeal to external circumstances, rather than looking to a theological source. Furthermore, his repeated appeal to the issue of the 'rights of laity' and the necessary limits of these rights (see his suggestion on p. 35, that excessively broadening the rights of the laity would lead to secularization) positions the discussion on risky sociological ground, rather than on a solid biblical and theological foundation.

[1061] Karmiris, *Laity*, 34. The author does not clarify whether he means ontological or just functional inferiority. We may very well ask, 'why "inferior" and not simply different?'.

Staniloae is animated by his constant drive towards balance when he seeks to work out the Christological/pneumatological basis for the theology of ministry over against what he perceives to be an exaggerated Christological approach to it in Catholic theology and an exaggerated pneumatological approach in Protestant circles.

Roberson agrees that Staniloae's statement is true when applied to the classic Latin tradition and adds that the tendency is frequently criticised as such by modern Catholic theologians. However, he rightly insists that we have to keep in mind the fact that the minister is understood in both Catholic and Orthodox traditions as a representative of Christ,[1062] which makes this imbalance to be one that is easy for both churches to fall into. In other words, both churches may be, and have been justifiably criticised for their clericalism.[1063] We venture to make the same charge in relation to Staniloae's theology of ministry and we believe that our comments below will substantiate this position.

One other instance of this tendency towards clericalism in Staniloae's ecclesiology is represented by his understanding of the way in which the gift of teaching is to be exercised in the Church. Thus, Staniloae does not exclude the lay people from teaching, but he limits their role to private teaching, while the public exercise of this ministry is reserved for bishops and priests.[1064] He does not offer any arguments in support of his position, which is a reflection of the fact that the laity is not very involved in the liturgical life of the Romanian Orthodox Church. However, in an earlier article, Staniloae had expressed, in somewhat vague terms, the possibility of some lay people in the church who have 'a superior spiritual life' to adding to the teaching given by the clergy.[1065]

Closely related to the previous issue is another objection of Staniloae concerning the Catholic tendency to present the ordained minister solely as a representative of Christ towards the congregation. Alongside this, he insists, we need to perceive the corresponding function of the minister as representative of the Church. Roberson agrees that we have here an obvious weakness of Catholic theology that needs to be addressed

[1062] Roberson, *CROE*, 163.

[1063] Karmiris, *Laity*, 3–4. The author makes so bold as to use the word 'clericalism', applying it to the Byzantine church after Constantine.

[1064] Staniloae, *TDO*, 2:246.

[1065] Staniloae, 'Natura sinodicitatii', 612.

in future studies, in the light of the guidelines given by the Second Vatican Council's Constitution on the Sacred Liturgy.[1066] Staniloae's suggestion points to a necessary correction, but, if not properly controlled by biblical principles, such criticisms could also make church leaders adopt certain positions because of 'popular demand', whether these positions were scripturally legitimate or not.[1067]

Furthermore, the ontological difference that Staniloae presumes to exist between clergy and laity may be dissonant with the trinitarian basis of his ecclesiology when it is analysed through the lens of the perichoretic model. If this ontological gap does indeed exist, a genuine *perichoresis* in the relationship between these two categories of members in the body of Christ would be impossible.

Although he affirms both the visible and the invisible character of the Church, probably because of his polemic against what he perceives to be the typical Protestant position, Staniloae tends to discuss almost exclusively the visible ecclesial structure, understood more in Christological/clerical/hierarchical terms, than in pneumatological/charismatic terms. A direct consequence of this neglect is the relatively little attention that Staniloae gives in his ecclesiology to the general priesthood of believers and the *charismata* of the believers. At this point Staniloae would insist that (episcopal) church structures pertain to the *esse* of the Church, while we would like to suggest that they might have to do just with her *bene esse*.[1068]

The discussion above is connected to another important observation. Staniloae does not give any attention to the different church government structures attested in the history of the church. He simply assumes that the episcopal structure is the only legitimate form and proceeds from there. We are prepared to challenge this presupposition. Both Catholic and Orthodox theologies take their inspiration for church government from the Pastoral Epistles, overlooking the fact that the rest of the New Testament presents other equally valid church structures. We suggest that the particular

[1066] Roberson, *CROE*, 164.

[1067] One possible example is the sanctification of the Moldavian prince Stephen the Great (1457–1504) by the Romanian Orthodox Church, following popular demand – see S. I. Stratul, 'Stefan cel Mare si Sfint; ecouri la canonizare', *Teologie si viata*, 2, 8–10, 1992, 211–215. This canonisation is a stumbling block for many in Romania, because Stephen, although he was a defender of Christianity against the Turks and a builder of many churches, not only had a quick temper, killing many people, but he also had many illegitimate children.

[1068] See J. Z. Skira, 'Review of M Volf, *After Our Likeness. The Church as the Image of the Trinity*', *Theological Studies*, 60, 2, June 1999, 376–377.

needs of the church and the context in which it witnesses are much more important that respecting a particular form. If this is correct, then an individual church might adapt its governing structures as its concrete circumstances changed, although obviously not without reference to biblical principles interpreted in the larger context of the history of Christian thought.

We need to add to the previous observation the point that in our opinion Staniloae's indictments of the low Protestant view of the visible Church are more relevant to the approach of those who follow the radical Reformation than to that of the Reformers themselves. The same is true of their views on the role of the Church in salvation and Christian living.[1069]

Staniloae does not build a biblical case for his model of the ordained minister as representative of Christ and especially as a visible confirmation of the Incarnation. Perhaps he does not feel the need to do so, since the model is not original but taken from the Church Fathers. However, building on feeble biblical ground and operating with speculative syllogistic devices, Staniloae comes to catastrophic conclusions regarding the practical implications of the denial of the priesthood. In reality, there are many Christian denominations which hold very conservative views on the incarnation and the salvation of the body, in spite of their highly anticlerical stance. Perhaps the only valid conclusion Staniloae makes regarding the implications of a denial of clerical priesthood is that it results in the denial of the essential and indispensable role of the Church as institution in the believer's personal salvation.

In addition to the central place given in his ecclesiology to the concept of communion, Staniloae also builds his edifice on the patristic principle of synergy. For example, the way he understands the fact that Christ and the ordained priest are intimately and indissolubly working together in the ministry of the church presents a magnificent picture and helps to avoid both a docetic and a purely immanentistic approach to ministry.

However, Staniloae does not work out the full implications of this principle of synergy. One possible example is the relationship between the validity of the

[1069] Commenting on this issue, A. McGrath writes in *Christian Theology, An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1994) 414: 'Calvin's doctrine of the Church reminds us that it is seriously inadequate to portray the reformers as rampant radical individualists, with no place for corporate conceptions of the Christian life'.

sacraments and the potential unworthiness of the minister. Staniloae believes that the worthiness that really counts is that of Christ, the actual unworthiness of the minister not having any consequences for the effectiveness of the sacraments. Obviously, Staniloae is following here a well-established path paved by Augustine during the Donatist controversy, but he seems to overlook the fact that his solution does not fit well with the synergy model. At the same time, he does not explore the practical consequences of the fact that, given this approach to the issue, the Orthodox churches do not really seem to have an effective and theologically based system of dealing with unworthy clergy.

The principle of a conciliar model as a basic structure of leadership of the Church and the subsequent validation of the decisions of the council in the believing Church as a sort of feedback mechanism is fascinating, but implies certain practical difficulties. Firstly, as Roberson rightly points out, 'how this is realised in the concrete is unclear'. Where does this end? Some Orthodox theologians believe that such a process might take centuries. Roberson considers that the solution that Staniloae and other Orthodox theologians have imagined offers 'a vague authority structure in the Church, which tends towards what they clearly want to avoid: an over-stressing of the pneumatological aspect of Church life, without a solid grounding in Christology.'[1070]

The truth is that the Orthodox bishops have never devised any mechanism for removing from the records of the councils those decisions that were not confirmed or that became outdated. This has left space for some to dig out and impose on the faithful anachronistic canons that had never been applied or that do not correspond anymore to present conditions in the Church, a reality seen in some Romanian monastic circles. Bria gives the example of the restrictions, 'unknown in the patristic tradition', that were introduced in some Orthodox catechisms of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries concerning the access of lay people to the Bible. He believes that such ecclesiastical canons 'refer to historical circumstances which are obsolete today' and that they should therefore be annulled and replaced with a definite programme of 'training and

[1070] Roberson, *CROE*, 167.

instructing the lay people to interpret the Holy Scripture correctly and to preach the Gospel authentically'.[1071]

Commenting on the charge of excessive institutionalisation levelled at the Catholic Church, Roberson asserts that Staniloae (as well as other Orthodox theologians) fails to take into account 'the historical and social conditions in the western Church which gave rise to these structures'. At the same time, Staniloae fails to recognise the presence of a definite conciliar tendency (this with reference to redefining the way the college of bishops needs to function) in post-Vatican II Catholic ecclesiologies, even if no move towards weakening papal primacy can yet be observed. Roberson believes that the Orthodox authors' tendency to overlook the movement towards decentralisation given momentum by Vatican II 'does not do justice to substantial shifts in Catholic circles towards greater emphasis on a communion ecclesiology'. However, implicit in this criticism is an acknowledgement of the fact that the Catholics have indeed neglected the community aspect of the Church. At the same time, Roberson rightly points to the fact that the structures of the episcopal dioceses are similar in the Orthodox and Catholic Churches, the only difference being the central administrative structures of the Vatican.[1072]

However, is Orthodoxy itself free from the hierarchicalism for which it criticises Catholic ecclesial structures? In spite of certain obvious excesses, we may say that the conciliarity of the council of bishops is a positive aspect of the Orthodox model. Nevertheless, at the local level Orthodox churches are run very much along hierarchical lines. We contend that Forte's conclusion about the Catholic context is equally valid for Orthodoxy: 'the wealth and variety of the gifts received by believers at baptism and their "universal priesthood" were overshadowed by the teaching, worshiping and pastoral functions proper only to the hierarchical ministry'. In such a context, ecclesiology can easily become mere 'hierarchology'.[1073] As Moltmann stresses, 'ecclesiology becomes hierarchology if we do not start from the fact that every believer, whether he be an office-bearer or not, is a member of the messianic people of God. The ministry is turned into an insipid – a 'spiritless'– kind of civil service and the charisma

[1071] I. Bria, *Destinul Ortodoxiei* (Bucharest: EIBMBOR, 1989) 278–279.

[1072] Roberson, *CROE*, 163.

[1073] Forte, *Icon*, 33.

becomes a cult of the religious genius, if we do not make the one charismatically living community our point of departure'.[1074]

The issue discussed above is related to an obvious discrepancy between the conciliar ecclesiology espoused by Staniloae and other Orthodox theologians of this century, and the strict hierarchical structure of the national Orthodox Churches. The explanation seems to be a historical one. As Orthodox theology was heavily influenced for over three centuries by Catholic scholasticism, following the Orthodox Confession of Peter Mogila, Metropolitan of Kiev, which was imposed at the Synod of Iassy (1642) it seems that the present rigid structure of the Orthodox Churches in that part of the world is the direct result of this influence. The return to the conciliar approach of the Church Fathers is a quite recent theological phenomenon that does not seem to have affected yet the structures of the Church. We may hope that theology will eventually find its way out from the minds of the theologians into the practical life of the Orthodox Church, including its hierarchy.

Moving now to another topic, we consider that Staniloae is correct as far as the disunity of Protestantism is concerned, but the reasons for this tragic reality are much more complex than their overemphasis on the pneumatological and the divine to the detriment of the Christological and the human, as he claims.

Similarly, Staniloae exaggerates even more, in our opinion, when he concludes syllogistically and in a catastrophic manner that a denial of sacramental priesthood would leads Protestant believers to weaken the visible dimension of the Church and even to deny the incarnation of Christ. Again, Staniloae may be right when he states that Protestantism tends to emphasise the invisible dimension of the Church to the detriment of her visible dimension. However, the serious consequences that he deduces to have arisen from a non-clerical understanding of ministry seem to us highly speculative and dependent on premises that demand a much more rigurous demonstration.

The last observation we wish to make here has to do with the implications of the way Staniloae understands the theo-anthropic constitution of the Church for the issue of Christian unity. It seems that in the eyes of Staniloae and other Orthodox theologians, the most important obstacle in the way of healing the schism of 1054 is the Catholic

[1074] J. Moltmann, *The Church in the Power of the Spirit* (London: SCM, 1992[2]) 289–290.

concept of papal primacy and infallibility. The Orthodox propose a return to the conciliar principle of the first millennium, while the Catholics favour a relatively novel model of conciliar consensus, suggested at the Council of Florence in 1439, which tried to bridge the gap between the Catholic and the Orthodox Churches. This model admits the theoretical possibility of pluralism, as long as the formulations under discussion are complementary and not mutually exclusive. The above approach could be applied for instance to the two understandings of the procession of the Holy Spirit. However, the pluralist model has not been accepted by the Orthodox Churches, who insist on an ecumenical policy based on returning to the situation before the schism.

If this means simply a return to the principle of not introducing dogmatic changes unless there is complete ecumenical agreement, than we deem the Orthodox request legitimate and reasonable. We suggest, however, that what most Orthodox theologians mean by it is much more than this. They may very well be expecting the other Christian traditions to accept their rigid ecclesiological conservatism as the only legitimate principle, which implies that any attempt at *aggiornamento* would become by definition objectionable. If our suggestion is correct, we consider that the Orthodox position is unacceptable for the following reasons.

Firstly, such a return is simply impossible – and not merely because time is irreversible. There is a vast gap, temporally and in every other way, between the eleventh and the twenty-first centuries. Secondly, we would like to suggest that this would be undesirable, even if possible. Being aware of the situation before the Great Schism, and of the fact that 1054 was only the last act in a long process of separation, it is doubtful that many, including the Orthodox, would wish to turn the clock back. Lastly, a denial of the principle of contextualisation, the necessary adaptation of the Church's structures and functions (without dogmatic compromise) to the changing conditions of the reality in which it is called to be incarnated,[1075] would be unacceptable not only to the Protestants but also to the Catholics. Whatever we believe about the legitimacy of papal primacy, it is doubtful that the solution suggested by the Orthodox will ever be accepted. Let us hope that the ecumenical wisdom of the Churches will

[1075] Surprisingly, Karmiris admits that the goal of stimulating more lay participation in the Orthodox Church, 'requires a corresponding change in the current ecclesiology so far as this point is concerned and the adaptation of the church to the new forms of a constantly evolving and changing society' – *Laity*, 36.

prevail and an acceptable solution will be found, one which will also be firmly rooted in the historical faith of the Church.

We conclude this chapter by arguing that in spite of the trinitarian inconsistencies that we have revealed in this chapter with the help of our perichoretic model, Staniloae's ecclesiology remains nevertheless on firm trinitarian ground.

12 A Perichoretic Evaluation of Staniloae's Ecclesiology

With this chapter, we have come to the end of our journey through Staniloae's theology. It has obvious by now that Staniloae was a thoroughly trinitarian theologian. The triune God did not represent just a theme among others or a section of his *Dogmatics*. His understanding of the God who exists eternally as the perichoretic communion of Father, Son and Holy Spirit formed the foundation of his theological construction[1076] and penetrated everything he wrote.

Staniloae was also a mystical and doxological theologian. Rational understanding of the dogma (cataphatism), important as it may be (and, unlike in the case of Lossky, very important for him) is not the final purpose of his theologising. As we have already shown, for Staniloae a theology that can be reduced to a set of propositional statements, even (or especially) when these form a very complex system, is simply idolatrous. God was for him not a riddle to be solved, but a mystery to be worshipped. A theology that did not bring one closer to the mystery of the triune God would not be worthy of its name.[1077] This is the reason why we may rightly use about Staniloae the eastern patristic saying, 'if you are a theologian you will pray truly; and if you pray truly, you are a theologian'.[1078]

In this last chapter of our study of Staniloae's understanding of the Church, we intend to tie most if not all of the loose ends in this section and to bring together the most important positive and critical conclusions we have reached concerning the consistency of Staniloae's trinitarian ecclesiology. In most places, there will be no need to back up our statements with bibliographic support, as we have already done so sufficiently in the previous chapters.

[1076] We avoid intentionally the term 'system', because of Staniloae's consciously non-systematic approach. This has led one commentator to argue that 'his way of thinking was more cyclical than linear' – T. Damian, 'Aspects of the Theology of the Gift in Fr. Staniloae's Synthesis' in Damian, *Theological Legacy*, 23.

[1077] Staniloae, *EG*, 1:34.

[1078] An aphorism of Evagrius of Pontus (346–399) – *On Prayer*, 60 (61) *PG* 79, 1180B. See also K. Ware, 'Experienta lui Dumnezeu in "Teologia Dogmatica" a Parintelui Dumitru Staniloae', in Ica. *PC*, 109–110.

12.1 Staniloae as a Trinitarian Ecclesiologist

We have focused our analysis in this third section of our research on Staniloae's general ecclesiology, as presented in his *Dogmatics* and various articles. We have intentionally left to one side his theology of sacraments and his liturgical theology, because an adequate treatment these themes would have risked distorting the balance of our work, given their extensive treatment in Staniloae's writings in comparison with his treatment of general ecclesiology.

Staniloae's theology of the ecclesial community is rooted in a Christological understanding of the human person as 'the image of Christ', who is himself the 'image of the Father'. This is particularly important in a post-communist context, where the dignity of the human person still suffers from having been systematically undermined by the previously dominant collectivistic Marxist ideology. Moreover, as images of the person of Christ, who exists eternally in *perichoresis* with the other two divine persons, the human ecclesial persons are called to mirror through the Spirit in their earthly existence, and with their limited possibilities, the perichoretic communion of the Trinity. This is another reason why the human persons, including their ecclesial dimension, form a mysterious reality, the 'connecting ring' between God and creation.

Staniloae perceived the fallenness of the human being as a 'weakening and distortion of being' rather than as 'total depravity'. This ontological optimism of Staniloae's runs the risk of not taking seriously enough the consequences of the fall, with important implications for ecclesiology. Thus it may lead to a triumphalistic view of the actual sanctity of the Church. Such a view of the Church rooted in 'realised eschatology' is not very helpful in dealing with the actual moral and ethical dimensions of the life of Orthodox believers.

The ecclesiology formulated by Staniloae is a continuous (more or less successful) striving for balance, between the role of Christ and that of the Holy Spirit, between clergy and laity, between the roles of Scripture and tradition, between the role of the cross and that of the other four components of the Christ event, etc.

Nevertheless, Staniloae's basic method in formulating his understanding of the doctrine of the Church is comparative and at times even polemical. More than once he operates with a caricature of the Catholic and Protestant positions, thus failing to engage

truly with the actual positions of those with whom he tries to dialogue. The risk of such an approach is a superficial dismissal of the (poorly understood) positions of the other Christian traditions, and a neglect of those problems in his own tradition which might have been revealed through a genuine confrontation with other points of view. It is obvious that this kind of methodology is not helpful for renewing one's own tradition, or in ecumenical dialogue with other churches.

Yet, in spite of this, Staniloae was a seriously engaged ecumenist. His constructive contribution in many ecumenical meetings, his proposal for solving the differences separating the Eastern and Oriental Orthodox Churches, and his formulation of the concept of 'open sobornicity' are just a few facts that attest this.

Although not neglecting the human and sociological dimension of the Church (so dominant in Protestant ecclesiologies) Staniloae aims to avoid instrumental definitions and seeks to emphasise the theological dimension of the Church as the 'mystical Body of Christ'. In so doing, Staniloae consistently follows his trinitarian presuppositions. Before being a human community, the Church is first and foremost an 'icon of the Trinity', the 'mystical Body of Christ'. As such, she is neither exclusively human, nor exclusively divine, but a theo-anthropic reality.

Staniloae strives for a similar kind of balance between the visible and the invisible dimensions of the Church, although, unfortunately, the balance is tilted almost completely in favour of the visible hierarchical structure of the church.

The role of the priest as a representative of Christ in front of the congregation of the faithful is strengthened in Staniloae's formulation of the theology of ministry by the role of the same ordained minister as a representative of the congregation before God and the world. This expresses well the priest's solidarity with the laity. Thus, the priesthood is not viewed as a separate class, existing without any reference to the *laos* of God, as in some pre Vatican II Catholic ecclesiologies.

The conciliar ecclesiology that Staniloae proposes in his *Dogmatics* presents a beautiful image of the perichoretic communion of the council of bishops that is attractive and winsome. Its practical effectiveness, however, depends on the extent to which its pragmatic dimensions are worked out.

From this positive assessment, let us now move to unveil some of the problems that we have identified in Staniloae's ecclesiology.

12.2 Trinitarian Inconsistencies Revealed

The use of our 'perichoretic model of the Church' has helped us reveal not only the predominantly consistent trinitarian structure of Staniloae's ecclesiology, but also a series of trinitarian inconsistencies in his theological construction.

Because of his somewhat excessive drive towards balancing the roles of Christ and the Holy Spirit in the Church, Staniloae tends to flatten the specificity of Christ and the Spirit in the economy of salvation.

Moreover, the shift of the balance towards the visible aspects of the church's structure resulted in a practical neglect of the pneumatologically rooted engagement in ministry of the whole congregation, lay people and clergy alike, and, in spite of the author's intentions, in a practical overemphasis on the Christological dimension of the ministry of the clergy.

Because of his over-reliance on the classic Augustinian idea of the validity of the sacraments in spite of a potential unworthiness of the minister, Staniloae does not appear to be preoccupied enough by, nor is he able to offer any valid solution to the problem of unworthy ministers which confronts sometimes the Orthodox Church.

Orthodoxy in general and Staniloae in particular have not been able to formulate practical guidelines for the application of the conciliar ecclesiology that they promote. This is true, for example, in the area of the need for an official disavowing of those canons of ecumenical councils that have not been validated by the faithful in the local communions, with the result that these obsolete decisions are still at the disposal of canonical rigorists, with negative effects on the normal life of the church.

Although it works quite well at the level of the council of bishops, the conciliar approach to ecclesiology does not appear to be applied consistently at the level of the local church (the faithful living under the authority of a bishop) or even at the level of the national Church. The reason for this may be the residual institutionalism and authoritarianism that have dominated eastern Orthodoxy ever since the time of the so-called 'Babylonian captivity of the Orthodox Church', under the influence of Catholic

scholasticism. The dictatorial leadership style that is characteristic of the post-communist mentality, present in all churches that have lived under communism, may be another circumstantial explanation for this undeniable reality.

Staniloae's ecclesiology is preponderantly inward looking and does not manifest an overtly missionary dimension, in spite of its principled affirmation of the responsibility of the Church to be a 'connecting ring between God and the world'. This high ideal, however, is not worked out in its practical implications. Such a neglect of the missionary role of the Church is a characteristic of many Orthodox Churches in countries with an Orthodox majority. A more 'perichoretic' development of the relation between the inward and the outward looking functions of the church would have given birth to a more balanced understanding of the Church that would have lead Orthodox Churches to be more actively engaged in reaching the world with the message of salvation.

Staniloae wants to avoid at any cost the exaggerated forensic dimension of western soteriology. This is definitely a legitimate concern. Nevertheless, we have suggested that, as a result, Orthodox theology in general and Staniloae in particular, tend to shift the balance in the opposite direction, not giving proper attention to the juridical implications of sin and salvation. A more balanced approach to these aspects of soteriology, and to their ecclesiological implications, which took into consideration both the ontological-relational and the forensic dimensions of human sinfulness, would have resulted in a more holistic theology in which the mystical experience of God was not conceived as being opposed to ethics, which tends to be seen as a typically Protestant immanentistic preoccupation.

We agree with Bartos that 'there is a sense of excessive spiritualization in Staniloae's tendency, in his mystical theological approach, to spend rather more time in dialogue with tradition than with contemporaries, so that modern concerns become secondary. There is a regrettable lack of more serious engagement with contemporary issues, leading to deserved criticism'.[1079] A more balanced approach to the relationship between patristic roots and contemporary concerns in Staniloae's ecclesiology would

[1079] Bartos, *DEOT*, 335.

have enhanced his ability to have a more far-reaching impact in the contemporary life of the Orthodox Church in Romania and beyond.

12.3 Conclusions

From our analysis above, in the light of our 'perichoretic model of the Church', we may conclude that generally Staniloae's ecclesiology is constructed on a solid trinitarian foundation. Yet our perichoretic model has also helped us identify a number of ways in which Staniloae does not achieve full consistency in terms of his own trinitarian agenda. As we have pointed out, these inconsistencies are sometimes consequences of conscious choices that Staniloae made during the elaboration of his theology, but, in most cases, they are rooted in the characteristic inclinations of Orthodoxy as a whole, particularly towards sacramentalism and clericalism. We have to underline, however, that Staniloae adopts these features of Orthodoxy wholeheartedly, for better or for worse.

Given its trinitarian coherence and measure of balance, Staniloae's doctrine of the Church constitutes a model worth following (albeit in a critical manner) not only by younger Orthodox ecclesiologists, but also by ecclesiologists from other Christian traditions, including Evangelicalism.

Final Conclusions

LaCugna once suggested that 'the ultimate aim of systematic theology is not analytic but constructive. It is not enough in theology to detect inadequacies in a theology or doctrine. There is always the challenge to advance new ways of thinking and speaking about God.'[1080] This statement reflects well what we have endeavoured to accomplish in this thesis. We have started our theological investigation already having a great admiration for Staniloae. Our present study has given us even more reasons to love him as a theologian and to appreciate his unparalleled contribution to the formulation of a Romanian theology that is both thoroughly rooted in the richness of Eastern patristic thought and fully open to engage consistently with the challenges of contemporary society.

It is true that, at times, we have pointed to what we perceived to be certain inadequacies in his writings, but this has not been in any way our purpose. It should be clear to an unprejudiced reader that our appreciation outweighs any criticism that we have formulated. We have to confess that sometimes, observing Staniloae's unfair treatment of our own Evangelical tradition, we have had to fight the temptation to engage in a point-by-point refutation of his allegations.[1081] Yet we have refused to do so, for a number of reasons.

Firstly, this is not an apologetic piece of writing. We have not been aiming to 'prove' something, not even that we were right and he was wrong, but rather to offer a fresh perspective on Staniloae's understanding of the Church, using our perichoretic model of the Church. Certainly, in the process, we have found points both of agreement and of disagreement, but we have not deliberately looked for faults and inconsistencies.

Secondly, we doubt that Staniloae was ignorant of the true beliefs of the Evangelicals. Moreover, his charges are sometimes so exaggerated that one feels tempted to psychoanalyse them. They are probably rooted in certain traumatic personal

[1080] C. M. LaCugna, 'Philosophers and Theologians of the Trinity', *Modern Theology*, 2, 3, April 1986, 178.

[1081] Similar temptations have confronted Evangelical commentators on Staniloae, such as Bartos and Rogobete and Catholic analysts of his theology, such as Roberson and Lupu.

experiences and may have complex explanations that we have not been able to discover. We have therefore decided to leave the clarification of these matters to some future researcher. Moreover when we truly love someone, we are ready to forgive him even the sins he has committed against us.

To our knowledge, nobody has yet attempted to use the trinitarian concept of *perichoresis* as a basis for an ecclesiological model.[1082] We have suggested that a model of the Church rooted in the trinitarian concept of *perichoresis* can enable us to gain a fresh perspective on Staniloae's trinitarian ecclesiology. We have embarked on this project in the hope that this new way of looking at ecclesiology would help us reveal the consistency of the trinitarian construction of Staniloae's doctrine of the Church, as well as some possible inconsistencies.

1 Summary of the Thesis

We here succinctly present the principal conclusions that we have reached.

We have started our study with an assessment of the crisis of religious symbolism during modernity, in an attempt to establish the methodological legitimacy of the use of metaphors and models in theology.

We have shown, convincingly we believe, that reality, as we perceive it at the beginning of the third millennium after Christ, has refuted the secularist expectations of the progressive death of the symbolic universe (including its religious dimension) as humanity advanced towards its rationalistic goal. The progressive secularization observable in Europe and the global academic community appear today as exceptions, while the resurgence of religious fundamentalism and the rapid extension of conservative forms of Christianity in the Two-Thirds World proves that religion is alive and well in our contemporary world.

Modernity's secularization hypothesis was definitely mistaken. Moreover, it has not only failed to displace religion from its central place to a merely private place in the

[1082] It is true that J. F. Watson writes in one of his articles about 'Martin Chemnitz's Perichoretic Ecclesiology' (*Lutheran Forum*, 27, 1, 1993, 41–43), but he connects this concept to Christological *perichoresis*, a concept that we have rejected because of a number of reasons that we have presented in the first section of our work.

life of many of our contemporaries but it has also been unsuccessful in its attempt to give meaning to reality without reliance on a transcendental referent.

Following developments in ethnology and psychoanalysis at the beginning of the twentieth century, we witnessed in the second half of that century a resurrection of the symbol, including its religious dimension. Although we welcomed this renewal of interest in symbolism, we insisted that it is not necessarily a genuine resurrection of symbol. The reason is that sometimes this involves only a superficial re-establishment of the symbolic 'language game', many of the new symbols being empty of any transcendental referent. Nevertheless, this resurrection of religious symbolism gave us confidence that the use of metaphors and models in theology could still be a way of conveying truth in the twenty-first century.

We have concluded that metaphors have been legitimately advocated as useful in both science and theology. However, they should not be reduced to mere rhetorical devices. Metaphors certainly play an important aesthetic role, and they are also adequate vehicles for linguistic creativity, but we have argued that, at least for our study, the most important function of metaphor is its heuristic one– its capacity to mediate access to new knowledge.

We have argued that models play in theology a role similar to that played by metaphors in language. From the different types of models available, we have chosen to formulate a meso-theoretical model, which we have called 'a perichoretic model of the Church'. This, we have suggested, could offer to the theologian a new understanding of the concept of the Church.

We have demonstrated that although the concept of *perichoresis* appeared quite early in Christian theology, it was rarely used until the eighth century, when it became widely known through the work of John of Damascus. At the end of our analysis of the three meanings that this concept has received, we concluded that trinitarian *perichoresis*, the interpenetration of the three divine persons in the Trinity, is the uncontested meaning of this term. Thus, trinitarian *perichoresis* became the basis of the 'perichoretic model of the Church', which we formulated as a tool for the investigation of Staniloae's ecclesiology.

After a period of decline, following scholasticism and particularly the Enlightenment, the doctrine of the Trinity returned to the forefront of the theological

scene during the twentieth century. A key characteristic of this trinitarian development was the return to a healthier emphasis on the economic Trinity, which, nevertheless, was not without certain dangers, particularly because of degree of neglect of the ontological aspects of the doctrine under discussion.

Our study has demonstrated, beyond any doubt, we believe, that Staniloae was a thoroughly trinitarian theologian, standing on the firm trinitarian foundation laid by the Cappadocians and other eastern Fathers. Following them, Staniloae formulated his trinitarian model, which accounts for divine unity in terms of its rootedness in the monarchy of the Father. He developed this approach in polemic with the Augustinian model of the Trinity, which accounts for divine unity on the basis of the somewhat impersonal concept of divine substance. The concepts of person and communion stand at the centre of his trinitarian understanding. Armed with these fundamental concepts, he dared to challenge not only the Catholic and Protestant positions but also positions formulated by certain Orthodox theologians.

Staniloae attached a maximum degree of importance to the issue of the role of the Holy Spirit within the Trinity and the Church. This is why he was so vehement, maybe too vehement, in his arguments against the western doctrine of *filioque*, which, in his opinion, was not only a hindrance to ecumenism but also very dangerous, because of its supposedly disastrous pneumatological and ecclesiological consequences.

A very important fact for the scope of our study is that Staniloae insisted on the legitimacy of the analogies between the interpersonal relationships within the divine Trinity and human relationships, particularly within an ecclesial context, while being aware, at the same time, of the limits of these analogies, because of the created nature of humanity and its sinful state.

Although Staniloae never wrote any treatise on *perichoresis* and even though *perichoresis* was never at the forefront of his triadology, nevertheless, the concept penetrates everything in his understanding of the Trinity and implicitly in his trinitarian ecclesiology.

Since the Church is a theo-anthropic reality, we could not comprehend Staniloae's ecclesiology without an introductory study of his Christological anthropology. According to his understanding, the human being, made of body and spirit, is an 'image of the image', a created being called to reflect through the Spirit the

perfection of Christ, who is the image of the Father. In the light of their being 'in the image of God', humans are also called, according to Staniloae, to be dialogical beings, inescapably created for community. This makes the Church a very special kind of community, called to play an essential role in God's plan of redemption for the whole of creation.

For Staniloae, the Church is above all else an icon of the Holy Trinity, called to reflect in her existence in time and space the perichoretic harmony existing eternally between the divine persons. Staniloae aims to achieve in his ecclesiology a balance between the roles of Christ and the Holy Spirit, in order to avoid the centralistic institutionalisation that characterises Catholicism and the individualistic fragmentation specific to Protestantism.

We have observed in Staniloae's ecclesiology and in his theology in general a tendency towards a holistic approach. This is reflected, *inter alia*, also in his insistence on rooting the Church not simply in Christ's sacrifice on the cross, but in all five essential events of the Christ event, from the incarnation to the Pentecost.

As with his approach to trinitarianism, Staniloae developed his ecclesiology in polemic with Catholic and Protestant understandings of the Church. Even if he was not always fair in the presentation of his opponents' positions, we have to commend his quite unique (for an Orthodox) willingness to enter into dialogue with other Christian traditions. This ecumenical drive led Staniloae to formulate his concept of 'open sobornicity', whose potential for stimulating ecumenical dialogue has still not been sufficiently explored.

Staniloae's typically Orthodox distinction between dogma, *theologoumena* and theological opinions is very useful from an ecumenical perspective. Inflexibility on dogmatic matters may provide the ecumenical movement with the necessary stability of conviction that offers protection from the kind of compromise that seeks for Christian unity by sacrificing the eternal truth of God or building unity around the lowest common denominator. Moreover, allowing as it does for diversity in *theologoumena* and private opinions, this understanding leaves space for exploring and sharing different positions, providing an important potential for both unity in agreement and disagreement without loss of unity within the ecumenical dialogue.

Staniloae's drive for balance can also be observed in the way he tried to work out the Christological/pneumatological basis for the theology of ministry over against an exaggeratedly Christological approach to it in Catholicism and an exaggeratedly pneumatological approach in Protestantism. Yet it is obvious that building as it does on the same metaphor, of the ordained minister as a symbol of Christ, Orthodoxy risks falling into a similar kind of clericalism to that of Catholicism. This is exemplified by the limited attention given by Staniloae to the priesthood of all believers, the absolute dominance of the episcopal model of church government and the relative institutionalisation and hierarchicalism of the national Orthodox Churches.

The conciliar model of the Church presented by Staniloae, with the subsequent validation in the believing community of decisions made by the council of bishops, is very attractive, in spite of its practical difficulties. At the same time, in a manner similar to that of most Orthodox theologians (but also to the official Catholic position) Staniloae insisted that the Orthodox Church is the only true Church. Yet this rigid position did not prevent him from engaging in a significant manner in the ecumenical dialogue.

Looking at Staniloae's ecclesiology through the lens of our perichoretic model, we have found that the author was largely able to accomplish his ambition of building a consistently trinitarian doctrine of the Church. At the same time, our model has enabled us to uncover certain inconsistencies in his trinitarian construction. These have to do more with the inner structures and inclinations of Orthodoxy than with Staniloae's specific formulations, although they became his own through his unreserved commitment to the Romanian Orthodox Church.

In the final analysis, we may say that Staniloae presented in his general ecclesiology a fascinating dogmatic synthesis that dared to challenge ecclesiological positions both inside and outside of the Orthodox theological camp. Obviously, it was not without imperfections, ambiguities and contradictions, but it was nevertheless the work of a great theologian and it opened a large door for future developments in trinitarian ecclesiology.

2 Limits of our study

Because of the specific parameters and the strict rules of doctoral thesis writing, but also for reasons of balance, we have had to limit our study to an analysis of Staniloae's general ecclesiology, without taking into consideration, for instance, his theology of the sacraments or his liturgical theology.

In the process of our study, we have also investigated other areas of his theology, such as his doctrine of the Trinity, including his understanding of *perichoresis*, or his Christological anthropology, only to the extent that these contributed to our ability to understand his general ecclesiology more adequately.

It is obvious that our study has only scratched the surface of the potential presented by the perichoretic model (rooted in the trinitarian meaning of this concept) as applied to ecclesiology. Future studies may be able to refine the model and make it even more useful not only as a research tool for trinitarian elaborations of the doctrine of the Church, but also as a structural tool, helpful in the formulation of new ecclesiological constructions.

3 Future Directions of Study

One of our ambitions in the years to come is to formulate a perichoretic ecclesiology for the Evangelical tradition. As we have mentioned a number of times during our study, Protestants in general and Evangelicals in particular have been criticised for their low view of the Church. We agree with this analysis and have to admit that our ecclesiologies are often quite immanentistic, having very little room for an understanding of the Church as a theo-anthropic reality, as the mystical body of Christ. Evangelical ecclesiologies tend to approximate to sociology and social psychology rather than theology, in the proper sense of this word. Furthermore, historically speaking, Evangelicals have formulated their theologies within western contexts, in dialogue with Catholicism and magisterial Protestantism. Living in a predominantly Eastern Orthodox context, we are facing the unique challenge of building an Evangelical theology of the Church in constructive dialogue with Orthodoxy. We are convinced that this has a great potential to enrich not only the two traditions involved, but also the theological treasury of the whole Church.

No Romanian or foreign theologian has yet attempted to formulate a comprehensive analysis of Staniloae's theology. What we have done in this study and what others have done before us and with us, has been to investigate just one aspect of his thought, even if we have done so with reference to other aspects of his theological construction. We are convinced that more studies of this kind will appear in the years to come. Nevertheless, the time will come, sooner rather than later, for an in-depth analysis of Staniloae *oeuvre* in its entirety. For that to happen, however, at least in the Romanian context, we will have to experience a mutation from the eulogistic tone that dominates today's Staniloae studies to a more serious and genuinely academic methodology. We may well say, together with Baconsky, that 'we will not be able to demonstrate our appreciation of his memory unless we are be able to study him as he deserves, sparing him, at the same time, the homage of a sepulchral classicisation'.[1083]

There has not yet been an attempt to understand the whole of Staniloae's ecclesiology. We hope that our present work, confined as it is to his general ecclesiology, will offer a good foundation for future studies. Thus, besides his already mentioned sacramental and liturgical theology, a comprehensive analysis of Staniloae's understanding of the Church will have to take in consideration issues like his ecumenical theology, the way he understood the relation between national identity and confessional commitment, and so on.

We are persuaded that the time when Staniloae studies will flourish has only just begun. The future will prove that building with discernment on his legacy is the best thing that can happen to Romanian theology.

[1083] T. Baconsky, 'Dumitru Staniloae si capcana clasicizarii', in Baconsky and Tataru-Cazaban, *Paradoxul*, 19.

Bibliography

Abbreviations

ABBREVIATION	STANDS FOR:
Baker	Baker Book House
CD	Karl Barth, *Church Dogmatics*
CROE	Ronald Roberson, *Contemporary Romanian Orthodox Ecclesiology. The Contribution of Dumitru Staniloae and Younger Colleagues*
CUP	Cambridge University Press
DEOT	Emil Bartos, *Deification in Eastern Orthodox Thought*
DSTMT	Lucian Turcescu (ed.), *Dumitru Staniloae: Tradition and Modernity in Theology*
EG	Dumitru Staniloae, *The Experience of God*
EIBMBOR	Editura Institutului Biblic si de Misiune al Bisericii Ortodoxe Romane
EuroJTh	*European Journal of Theology*
GOTR	*The Greek Orthodox Theological Review*
Holy Cross	Holy Cross Orthodox Press
IHRO	Dumitru Staniloae, *Iisus Hristos si restaurarea omului*
IJST	*International Journal of Systematic Theology*
JETS	*Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society*
JES	*Journal of Ecumenical Studies*
JR	*The Journal of Religion*
JTS	*Journal of Theological Studies*
LBC	London Bible College
NKJV	*New King James Version* (Nashville, Tn.: Thomas Nelson, 1982)

OPEFDS	Elias O'Brien, *The Orthodox Pneumatic Ecclesiology of Father Dumitru Staniloae: An Ecumenical Approach*
OUP	Oxford University Press
PC	Ioan I. Ica, (ed.), *Persoana si comuniune*
PUP	Princeton University Press
RS	*Religious Studies*
SJT	*Scottish Journal of Theology*
ST	*Studii teologice*
SVSP	St. Vladimir's Seminary Press
SVTQ	*St. Vladimir's Theological Quarterly*
TC	Dumitru Staniloae, *Theology and the Church*
TDO	Dumitru Staniloae, *Teologia dogmatica ortodoxa*
UCP	University of Chicago Press
UNDP	University of Notre Dame Press
WCC	World Council of Churches
YUP	Yale University Press

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